

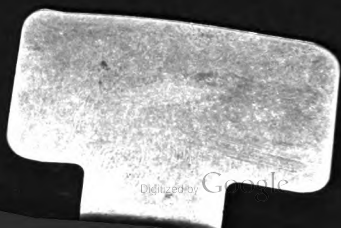
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# THE LIFE OF PEACE.



# THE LIFE OF PEACE.

BY THE

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## NOTE.

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THE accomplished and spiritual author of "The Life of Peace" fell asleep in CHRIST as these sheets were passing through the press; the first of them were read and corrected by him, as he was entering the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Refined to saintly purity by suffering, which he bore with un-murmuring patience, filial submission, and unswerving trust, in his last hours, when "his sun," as he said himself, "was going down at mid-day," he became an example of the power of the truths he had taught in the concluding pages of this book—the last traced by his pen. The teacher proved himself to be his own pupil. During a last interview, the writer of this Note, who had known and loved him for many long years, made the remark, "The inevitable must be borne." "No," he gently said, "the FATHER'S Will." On Easter Sunday in this spirit he passed to his rest.

" Death gives life's last word a power to live,  
And like the stone-cut epitaph, remain  
After the vanish'd voice, and speak to men."



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# THE LIFE OF PEACE.

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## INTRODUCTION.

**T**HE Prophet Isaiah declares in the name of God that perfection of peace shall be the portion of His people, if they obey His commandments, "O that thou wouldst hearken to My commandments, then should thy peace be as a river."<sup>1</sup>

To realise the thought conveyed in these words, let us imagine some great river. As we take our place in thought upon its bank, as we gaze upon its waters, as our eye scans its bright, pure depths, or travels over its wide expanse to the opposite bank, we naturally think, what a wondrous mass of water is here! my mind fails in its effort to apprehend this great abundance. These waters seem to roll on and on as from exhaustless and never-failing fountains. Thus, when we are told that the peace of those who hearken

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xlviii. 18. The words may justly be taken in the present tense, as is observed in the Speaker's Commentary, though rendered in our version in the past.

to GOD's commandments is to resemble this, we must feel the meaning to be that that peace is to be inconceivably great.

Then perhaps our next thought is, whence came all this world of waters? And our mind goes back to the countless tributaries that have swelled its course. Each of these again is composed of many streams. These streams have arisen from small beginnings. The rains of Heaven, which rose up out of the distant sea, have descended upon the mountain in which this great river took its rise. Or a tiny spring, issuing unnoticed from the rock in some far-off land, was the source from which its being sprang. And we think how wondrous small once was what now we see so great, how unmarked by man the beginnings of this now famous stream; and we think how but for those small beginnings this river would never have existed. And again, how but for the constant accession of tiny rills and rushing torrents, of ample streams and rivulets as large as itself, it would never have grown to its present greatness and beauty. And reflecting on all these things in connection with the words of the Prophet about the Peace of the obedient, we will conclude that he meant to teach us, or rather GOD would teach us through him, that our Peace would have an origin small and unknown to man, but that it would flow on, increasing as it flowed, gaining more and more in fulness and in beauty as life went on, through all the accessions of streams of grace and showers of blessing which would be sent to join it from that same all-gracious Heaven from which at first it came.

This river has passed, we may be sure, through a very long and changeful career before it has gained that plenitude and calm which delight us now. In the early part of its journey it had to dash its way past ten thousands of stones and boulders, and down many a steep. But later it meandered more quietly through the valley, though at times there were rapids to fight through, and at longer intervals roaring cataracts to descend. Sometimes it was lost to sight altogether, but even when invisible, it was there in all its power. And now it has gained this fulness and repose which it is so soothing for us to contemplate, as its placid waters roll softly with a gentle murmur at our feet.

Fair, tranquil stream! and art thou an emblem of my peace? "Peace as a River;" ought then my peace to be, can it ever become like thee? Yes, dear reader, it can. Peace is yours, and fulness of peace. CHRIST has purchased it for you, CHRIST has bequeathed it to you. Listen: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."<sup>1</sup> This then is your heritage, peace, the very peace of JESUS, and that you know was perfect,—peace as a River. But although this is yours, you do not enjoy it, because like a river it is a thing of growth. And the manner of its growth is by obedience. "O that thou wouldst hearken to My commandments, *then* should thy peace be as a river." It will be my endeavour to show by the help of GOD how the Christian's inheritance and

<sup>1</sup> S. John xiv. 27.

privilege of peace can be realised by obedience, and how that peace can grow in fulness, power, and beauty through hearkening more and more to the Commandments of GOD.

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## CHAPTER I.

### *THE FOUNTAIN OF PEACE.*

“The thoughts that I think toward you are thoughts of Peace, saith the LORD.”—Jer. xxix. 11.

THE head-waters of a river are supplied by many brooks and mountain-rills, yet that is its true source whose rise is most distant. So the true source of the River of Peace is the Heart of GOD in eternity. For fallen man peace flows from the pierced Rock of Calvary. Again for individuals, it may be said to take its rise in the drops of baptismal water, since at the font the child is made a member of CHRIST, the Prince of Peace. But another source of this River springs up whenever in the silent hour the Christian now-grown to years of consciousness finds GOD.

Go to the sources of the Rhone, and you will see a powerful stream spring under the genial influence of the summer sun, from the hard, cold, glacial sea. Not that stream, however, you will be told, is the primal Rhone, but another, smaller brook, which here joins it, coming from a mountain more distant still. So when, at a man's conversion unto GOD, the soul is melted by a SAVIOUR's love, the stream of peace which flows forth is the most marked and mighty.



But that is not the primal River of Peace, for that you must look much farther back, to the Font of Baptism, to the Rock of Calvary, to the Heart of God.

First let us think of the primal source of the River of man's peace. That is, God Himself, Who so often is called in Holy Scripture the God of Peace, and Whose thoughts to man have ever been, and are still, "thoughts of peace." God Himself is "the sheer, immaculate, and silver Fountain," from which flows peace for man.

Hence when He made man at first, He gave him His peace, He placed him in an atmosphere of peace. And what is peace? It is a condition of the soul and life of man. That condition in which he can freely develop his nature and fulfil the work given him to do. As Pleasure is defined as the conscious forth-putting of power, so is Peace the absence of everything likely to hinder or to mar this energising.

We shall soon see indeed that Peace implies far more than the absence of hindrances, and is in itself a real and positive good. For the present, however, let it suffice to view it as the absence of all impediments to active energising and to happiness. Man as originally made was in peace both within and without. There was nothing to disturb him. Nothing could have disturbed him but sin, that is, disobedience to God. So long as man obeyed his Creator, everything must go well with him. For there is but one will which he obeys: the will is that of the supremely good and holy Being Who made him. Observe how obedience to one will gives peace, and freedom, and

happiness,—even where the will is a merely human and imperfect will. Look at the well-ordered family, where the father and master governs the concerns of the house, and things march in peace and harmony. Or look at any great establishment, such as for instance the calico-printing works at Rhodes. Here the vast concern performs its work in a steady and orderly manner, because a thousand workmen are obedient to one will, presiding over all and acting through all. The affairs of a mighty nation march in peace, when there is a strong executive which as one will directs and controls the whole. And if obedience to one will ensures peace and quietness even when that will is human and imperfect, how much more when the governing will is that of the all-holy and all-gracious God,—then, there will be perfect peace in perfect obedience. We see this illustrated in nature. The forces of nature render absolute and necessary obedience to God : and the planets revolve around the sun in peace, because mechanically obedient to the will of the Creator. In a word, peace is found in obedience to one will, and when it is the will of the all-holy and all-wise Creator which is obeyed there is found the perfection of man's life.

Now when GOD made our first parents, He expressed His will with regard to them in a law which should not be broken. In obedience to it they should find peace and life, whilst disobedience would entail the fatal results of anarchy and death. We know that at the instigation of a tempter, Adam and Eve disobeyed and ate *forbidden* fruit, whatever that particular fruit may have been which was forbidden them.

And what was the result? Peace departed, and Adam afraid of GOD, that is, at war with GOD (for whatever we fear is our foe) hid himself from Him Who is Love amid the trees of the garden.

“By one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners” (Rom. v. 19), and as sinners “enemies” to GOD (verse 8). The human race ~~was~~ severed from its true centre, GOD. It no longer revolved in loving obedience around its Sun. It hated that Sun and banished Him from its thoughts, would have expelled Him from His own universe if it could.

In place of GOD, man set up a rival in the shape of *himself*, his own will became for him GOD. He loved and served himself, instead of his Creator. An abnormal and disastrous state of things. For mark the result. “The fool had said in his heart, There is no GOD.” Hence his condition became as follows : “Corrupt are they and become abominable in their wickedness, there is none that doeth good, no not one. They are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become abominable. Their throat is an open sepulchre, with their tongues have they deceived, the poison of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and unhappiness are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known.”<sup>1</sup>

This is a fearful picture. To some it may appear an exaggeration : but not to those conversant with the darker side of life, and who know man as he is apart from CHRIST. Indeed his own conscience will

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xiv., liii.

at times acknowledge the truth of the description, humbling as it is.

A clergyman was once engaged in conversation with one of our shrewd, hard-headed, but often fearfully unbelieving town artisans. A long dispute seemed to be ending in nothing. The man conceitedly displayed his infidel arguments, never listening to what the witness for CHRIST urged in reply, but always thinking while he was speaking what smart thing he would say next. Thus does the working-man too often defend himself against the advances of infinite Love.

At length the clergyman said, "Well, I am afraid we can't agree, but will you let me just before going read to you a few words out of a very old book indeed?" The man had no objection, and so opening his Bible he read to him the Psalm I have just quoted, describing fallen man. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God," &c. He read it with emphasis on every strong word, and when he had finished closed the book and looked at his friend, and he, with a nervous gesticulation, showing how moved he was, exclaimed, "It's true, every word of it, dead dog that I am!"

Such then, on the testimony of his own conscience too in its sincere mood, is fallen man. If he does not deny God's existence, he hates Him, which is almost worse. Man defiled hates the pure Fountain from which his being flowed. Those who have had to do with criminals tell us of a bitter hatred to the Holy One engendered by habits of sin. Once in a gold mining community, where I was doing duty, I

learnt that an old man, long a ringleader in everything wicked, was taken ill. Feeling that an opportunity had come at last, I was soon at his bed-side. But he cut short my first attempt to draw his thoughts to GOD with the words, "It don't seem to me right to speak to a man about religion when he's down. It's not giving him a fair chance." The man felt himself unfortunately too ill to defend himself against his GOD, and so I must desist! Now this may be an extreme illustration, but the thing itself is, alas, common enough. There would be little persecution of religion if there were no heart-hatred of GOD in fallen man.

We see then how low man had fallen through sin. A stranger to peace, full of remorse and misery, a prey to all contending passions; he was without GOD in the world, nay, even hating the FATHER of his spirit. But the GOD of love did not leave him thus. Rich in mercy, He came near to His sinful and miserable children in the only way in which He could, in the person of a suffering and sin-atonement Mediator. "GOD commendeth His love to us in that while we were yet sinners, CHRIST died for us."<sup>1</sup> In the fulness of time CHRIST JESUS came to reconcile sinful man to GOD, making friends of those whom sin had severed, destroying that false god Self, and teaching men by the love that He showed them to transfer their love and allegiance from self to Him, and through Him to His FATHER, thus restoring peace. Therefore is JESUS called the Prince of Peace, and specially "our Peace."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. ii. 14.

But the reconciliation to GOD and restoration to peace which our LORD CHRIST as the Second Adam accomplished for the whole of our race, had to be applied to each individual person one by one. And as CHRIST had told His Apostles to make disciples of all nations by baptism ; and as those Apostles had announced, "The promise is to you and to your children,"<sup>1</sup> the Church from the outset admitted little children into the kingdom of the Prince of Peace in Holy Baptism.

Hence all Christians find themselves members of that kingdom, having received peace with GOD through CHRIST. They have been "called unto peace,"<sup>2</sup> being called into His Church, and they are early taught to walk in the ways of peace, which are the ways of obedience, and soon they discover, both at home and at school, that the path of obedience is indeed the only path of peace.

Whilst the reasoning powers still slumber, the child of GOD is only partially conscious of his Christian vocation. But on the awaking of reason and the attaining of years of discretion, he is instructed as to his position in the Christian covenant, the privileges conferred on him at the font and the duties involved ; next at his Confirmation he solemnly takes upon him those duties, and has those privileges sealed to him by GOD the HOLY GHOST. He has now entered consciously and intelligently upon the path of obedience, and he finds that, in proportion as yielding himself to the guidance of the Spirit, and working together with Him, he resists his own self-will, and hearkens to

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 39.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 15.

GOD's commandments, Wisdom's ways are "ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."<sup>1</sup>

There are some; though unfortunately but few, who never seriously forsake these blessed ways. GOD permits most of us to see at least once in a lifetime some lovely character which has unfolded like a flower into almost perfect beauty until nature has become transfigured into grace. In such the gifts of GOD are freely given from the very first, His natural and His sacramental dower have fully produced the effects which they are indeed fitted to create in *all* who receive them. The human will has no sooner opened than it has closed again in the will Divine, dying in that, to find there its own true life. The lovingkindness of GOD the FATHER embracing all His works, the love of JESUS CHRIST bowing His meek head for sinners on the Cross, the love of the HOLY SPIRIT Who has come down into the heart to fill it with blessedness; all this, taught perhaps by a holy mother from the very dawn of intelligence, has been at once felt, believed in, and acted upon. There never was a time when that holy child can recollect having *first* felt the love of GOD, or tried to please Him. All his life, all her life has been an increasing obedience, and consequently a time of growing peace. Years and experience enable him to understand things better. He knows that the power of his own self-will would be terrible, were it not kept in subjection by long practice, and he feels as much as any one that in him, that is in the old or fleshly part of his nature, there dwelleth no good thing. The good in him, and he is

<sup>1</sup> Prov. iii. 17.

the more sensible of it the longer he lives, is the other godlike part, born not of the flesh but of the Spirit, and renewed after the image of Him Who created it, even the LORD JESUS CHRIST.<sup>1</sup>

But most of God's children here are not so wise as to continue steadfastly in the path of obedience. In ways more or less evil, they forsake the GOD of their youth, and whatever they may gain in miserable knowledge of the world and its wickedness, they thereby lose one thing which the world can never give them back,—that holy peace which is not as the world giveth.<sup>2</sup> Alas! the sweet dove of innocence is driven away by vanity or by vice, and when that once occurs, it is long indeed before the calm peace which JESUS gives again folds her wing within that heart.

I shall not here present a history of the various ways in which men and women lose their peace of mind. Enough, this loss is sustained whenever the effort to obey GOD is abandoned, and self, or any other centre is chosen as the soul's new god—wherever, in fact, it has become a habit to break the first Commandment, "Thou shalt have none other gods but Me." Nor need the object for the sake of which the true GOD is forsaken be in itself positively sinful, on the contrary, it may in itself be legitimate enough. It may be one's studies, trade, or profession. It may be a desire for worldly success and prosperity, and the deity sacrificed to may be the great god Get-on-in-life. Or again, it may be the passion of love, leading to the adoration of the creature in place of the Creator, (GOD over all blessed for ever.) Or again, the thing

<sup>1</sup> Col. iii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> S. John xiv. 27.



may be really bad, wickedness and vice in one of its countless forms. But whatever it be that is placed first, no man can serve two masters, and God has been forsaken, and so long as this condition lasts, it is true of the erring one that "the way of peace he hath not known." Great peace have they who love Thy commandments; but those who love something else instead, there is no peace, saith my God, for them.<sup>1</sup>

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## CHAPTER II.

*FALSE PEACE.*

"Is it peace? What hast thou to do with peace?"—2 Kings ix. 19.

**I**T is with many an anxious thought that the pious parents see the youth they have so carefully trained leave them to live alone amid the fearful temptations of London, or Army or Colonial life. And it is hardly with less anxiety that they see the daughter who at home has shown many signs of grace, quit the comparative shade and shelter of the innocent maiden who has not "come out," for the distractions and temptations to idolatry and vanity which shall beset her in the world of fashion and of falsehood; or, in other ranks of life, leave the protection of their roof to enter upon service or other work among strange companions, and exposed to manifold dangers. They endeavour indeed to make

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lvii. 21.

the best of what they cannot avert, and console themselves in commending the child of their careful training and many prayers unto God, remembering that after all "goodness consists not in untested innocence, but in tried and victorious virtue."<sup>1</sup>

We follow not here the career of those young persons. Let us rather visit them after a long interval of years, when we shall probably find them at the head of a family, and some kind of establishment, more or less well-to-do. In the case supposed, a very common one surely, these persons, for all their religious up-bringing, have long long ago forsaken the God of their youth, and are without God in this world. Yet they are well thought of by their neighbours and loved in a fashion by their friends. They seem to enjoy a great deal of worldly prosperity. Their success indeed was described by the patriarch thirty centuries ago: "They live, become old, yea are mighty in power. Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are at peace, neither is the rod of God for them."<sup>2</sup>

The Psalmist declares that he was "envious at the foolish, when he saw the prosperity of the wicked. There are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm."<sup>3</sup>

Every one knows such persons; they appear to be perfectly happy and contented. Nothing seems to ruffle or discompose them. They seem generally prosperous, as I have said, but if unsuccessful, they

<sup>1</sup> Arnold.

<sup>2</sup> Job xxi.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. lxxiii. 3, 4.

are able to meet adversity with a "light heart," confident of "better luck next time." Their peace seems indeed like a river, but it is not through hearkening to GOD's commandments. Indeed so far are they from drawing their peace from any such source, it is to their mind only matter of accident whether they please and serve GOD or not. They may be obeying Him in what they plan and perform, or they may not : their lives may, or they may not, be satisfactory in His sight. It is all a chance : and they do not trouble themselves to inquire whether it is so or not. The good things they do, the commandments of GOD they obey,—such as not committing murder, or stealing, being honest, industrious, good-natured,—are precisely those that other people appear to consider praiseworthy, or they would not think of doing them. They like to stand well with their neighbours, and do as others do. But as to GOD—as to one Who sees and judges their actions—as to a law of GOD coming to them from without and demanding their obedience—as to an exacting code of precepts set down in the Bible and an uncompromising example set forth in the life of CHRIST for their obedience and imitation—and that, without the least reference to what their *neighbours* may think right or good,—of all this they believe but little, and to all appearance, they care still less.

By our Catechism, each child of the Church is taught to "think that he is *bound* to believe and to do" certain things : but this is just what the child of the world will not think. That false and foolish notion of independence, which is the bane of fallen

man, has taken such hold on him that he thinks it more manly to be the slave of his own impulses than to be the servant of his GOD. Well are we taught to pray, "Thy service is perfect freedom :—" would GOD we all believed it.

A man in the prime of life was struck down with mortal sickness. The clergyman went to see him, and though received somewhat gruffly—for even in health the sick man was not particularly fond of parsons—was permitted to speak to him, which he did, plainly enough. The man admitted the truth of all he said, but replied, "It's all very true, but I winna be *teed*," (tied, that is ; bound, obliged to do anything at all but what he was in the habit of doing and liked to do.) Further expostulation on the reasonableness of his being obedient to his Maker, &c., only produced a renewed declaration that he would *not* be teed. And as he would not freely surrender, he was forced ; and within a few days grim death came and carried him whither he would not.

Well, then, is it for man to own that there is a Law of GOD, which he is bound to obey. But what is the Law of GOD? The Law of GOD is simply the expression of GOD's will for man. It is briefly expressed in the Ten Commandments as explained by CHRIST, and still further summarised in the command, "Thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself."<sup>1</sup> The law thus commands man to love GOD entirely, and man as himself. For GOD is love, and desires man to be perfect as his

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. xxii. 37.

FATHER in heaven is perfect.<sup>1</sup> Again, GOD is holy, and man must "be holy, for I am holy."<sup>2</sup>

The Law of GOD does indeed appear to sinful man very severe and very exacting. It not only requires outward obedience, but inward subjection in all things to GOD. It extends to the thoughts and intents of the heart. For instance, it not only forbids outward crimes, but the passions which lead to crime. It not only says, "Thou shalt do no murder," but thou shalt not be angry without a cause, and "he who hateth his brother is a murderer." It not only threatens the vicious and profane with punishment, but declares that all the people, however respectable and well thought of, who do no more than habitually *forget God*, should be turned into hell.

How fearful are its threatenings ! Death, it declares, is the punishment of sin.<sup>3</sup> Not merely the death of the body, but of the soul, yea, of the whole man,—such is to be the final doom of the disobedient.

But of these things the persons of whom I speak have been living on in ignorance. They do not give the subject a thought ; hence, *not* thinking, they can afford to take life easily. But in the sight of reflecting intelligences, human or Divine, can their condition be described as peace ? Not so, because as sinners they are under the sentence of eternal death, and that not the less really because unconsciously. The Indian slumbering in the canoe which is slowly and surely being drawn into the current, soon to bear it over Niagara's fatal falls, cannot be said to be at peace,

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. v. 48.

<sup>2</sup> 1 S. Pet. i. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. ii. 17 ; Rom. vi. 21, 23 ; S. James i. 15.

though he sleeps unconscious of his swift-approaching doom. A "peace" which is mere forgetfulness of the past, with all its sins, and unconcern about the future with its sure prospects of death, judgment, and eternity, is no true peace for man. It is only a sleep, and from it one day there will be a terrible awaking. That Indian, waking at length to find his bark on the green crest of Niagara's awful wave, shrieks a shriek of despair louder than the roar of the waterflood, as he is precipitated into the abyss. And the thoughtless man of the world, when in the end he discovers that he has lost his soul, will curse his folly in having thought himself at peace, when he had been living without an eye to the commandments of his God.

Many, alas, never make the discovery in this life. All the warnings and admonitions of Providence, all the calamities that befall or the blessings that enfold them, far from leading their thoughts upwards to God, or inwards to their condition in His sight, do no more than cause a moment's uneasiness, as when one suddenly awakened in the night sits up and casts a troubled look into the darkness, and presently lies down and goes to sleep again. Call after call comes from God, and being unheeded causes heart-hardness and increase of insensibility, until the man becomes hardly capable of giving attention to spiritual concerns at all.

Or again, is his conscience seriously disturbed? has his false peace forsaken him? Alas, how often does he seek to supply it by other quietives quite as vain and ineffective!

At first he will try to calm his conscience by such

excuses as that GOD will not really trouble Himself about his faults, or that He is merciful and will overlook them, or that, really being in the world one must do as the world does, or that anyhow one can't make anything better of it, one must take things as they come. Then to quiet the disturbing thoughts within, he will apply himself more diligently to business, labouring with more earnestness to gain wealth, whereof he knows full well he will soon have to leave every penny behind. Then of an evening, after his day of busy occupations, he will seek to throw off the burden of self which is becoming very irksome, by going into society, or perhaps to the opera or play. There for a moment he will be amused and forget. But is it peace he finds there? Hardly the peace of the eternal Heaven, since it lasts for but a few brief hours.

In exactly the same way and for the same purpose that the gentleman or lady seeks to still conscience amid the distractions of society or the amusements of life, does the artisan or ploughman repair after the day of toil to the village public-house, that he may there for a moment forget that there is a GOD above him, a conscience within him, and an eternity before him.

But there are higher and nobler narcotics than the amusements, more or less innocent, of life; and what one seeks in these, another seeks in the refinements of art. Vain, alas, the search in all! "Seek what ye seek, but it is not there where ye seek it."<sup>1</sup>

Art is assuredly, if subordinated to GOD, a very noble pursuit and a very high enjoyment. It shows

<sup>1</sup> S. Augustine.

us an ideal which we love and yearn after. It leads us into "a new and higher world over which a spirit of peace is outpoured, and where everything that lives and moves is enfolded, as it were, with the calm of eternity."<sup>1</sup> Above all is music a delightful, God-given thing. It has power to express, as words cannot, the mind of God in nature and the emotions of our own spirits. If we are "not" merry when we hear "sweet music," yet it takes the sting from the sadness which it evokes and makes even sorrow a not unpleasing thing. At the same time, it opens to us a door into the Infinite, and we are proud to feel that our true Home is there. What the immortal old man of Southey said to Music is what all of us have experienced, "Away, away, thou tellest of things which, in all my endless existence, I have found not, and shall not find."

How true, and therefore is there here no real peace for the soul of man. Music, like the other fine arts, may give a moment's rapture or repose, but even were it lasting it could not satisfy, for it is but "the shadow of good things to come;"<sup>2</sup> and surely for those who not knowing God, have no hope of gaining those substantial blessings of the future, it were a vain thing to rest in the enjoyment of the "shadow." Awaking from the momentary dream, they again find themselves amid the old grief, thrown back, as it were, on the "sandbank of reality" from which for an instant they had been charmed away. "CHRIST alone can give that peace which shall not be taken from us again; and this He does not by first luring us into

<sup>1</sup> Martensen's *Ethik*, p. 472.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. x. 1.



æsthetic illusions, but by first revealing to us Reality in all its seriousness, and giving us to know that the needs of man are far greater and more hazardous than we had supposed, because the source of all, spring of all that need wells up in our own heart, and by then speaking to us in no æsthetic but a moral practical sense, the words, Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, that ye may find rest unto your souls. I Myself will give it unto you.”<sup>1</sup>

Nature again is as incapable as Art of giving true peace to the soul that knows not God. There is indeed something exquisitely soothing in Nature. Often the mind reposes with delight on a lovely scene or forgets self amid the grandeur of the tempest or the cataract. To the reconciled and pardoned servant of Nature’s God she is a minister of the deepest and sweetest pleasure and consolation. The Spirit of God speaks to him peace through the rustle of the leaves or the murmur of the stream. But when the unforgiven would drink from these wells of pleasure, he is promptly arrested by the thought which rises up out of the depths of the forest or takes shape amid the raging of the storm, “Who is that Being who made all these things, that Judge whose sentence thou bearest in thy conscience? Acquaint thyself with Him, and be at peace. Then shall all His works be at peace with thee.”

Thus is true peace impossible for those who continue in ignorance of God and of their relation to Him. Of all unforgiven men it is true, “What hast thou to do with peace?” They may fancy all is well,

<sup>1</sup> Martensen’s Ethik, p. 473.

and in this delusion live out their days. It might be thought that the approach of death would undeceive them ; but few who go on hardening their heart from year to year discover in the end of their life that they have all along believed a lie. Most men die as they have lived. The latter end of the just, we are told, is peace ; but ah, the death-bed of the thoughtless is only a continuation of the old self-deception. Nor does the enemy of souls allow the delusion even to die with him. He perpetuates it among his relations, and they, misled like him, will tell you that his death was so peaceful and so happy.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### AWAKING.

“What meanest thou, O sleeper ? arise, call upon thy God.”  
—Jonah i. 6.

SUCH then is the history of those who live the victims of a false and delusive peace. Let us now turn our thoughts to those who having once, it may be, lost peace through sin, discover their loss and through grace repair it.

What, let us ask, prevents the man of the world from enjoying true and real peace with GOD and his own self. The answer is, a guilty conscience.

#### 1. *Guilt a hindrance to peace.*

There is nothing that hinders peace like guilt and

unpardoned sin. The man who has been living in false security is suddenly aroused, and forced to see things as they are. I stay not to inquire the occasion of his awaking; it may be sudden illness, or fearful peril of death by land or sea, it may be the death of one very dear to him, or it may be the still, small voice speaking through some book he has casually taken up, or some acquaintance with whom he has had a brief conversation; or, again, through some word heard in the sanctuary, or the sweet songs of Sion there. Whatever the occasion, his time has come, and the Spirit is convincing him of sin.

He is like a prisoner suddenly arrested and charged with some crime. His first thought is, "Did I do this thing?" His first impulse is, "No, it is impossible." Still he is charged with having done it. The circumstances are recalled to him, and he begins to realize something of it. It seems like a dream to him, he can hardly think it was he who did it. It was not like him to act so madly. He cannot have thought of the consequences of what he was doing. He is like one who has thoughtlessly, at the instigation of another, taken what was not his own, never intending in the least to *steal*. And now he hears himself charged with the theft, and is told he must go to jail for a crime which he cannot believe that he could ever have done in his senses, which he has done nevertheless.

So is it with one suddenly awake from a dream of false security in unforgiven sin. He has been living for himself and for the world instead of for God. He had no intention of robbing God. Yet he *has* robbed

GOD, and of GOD's choicest property, his own heart, his love, his life. Now he is told that GOD visits such sins with death eternal. Doubtless he thinks, "my punishment is greater than I can bear." "I did but taste a little honey and lo I must die."<sup>1</sup> Surely this is more than I deserve, he thinks.

However that may be, the punishment he must feel is a certain thing unless pardon be possible. But at first there is small thought of pardon. For the HOLY GHOST is convincing him of judgment. He sees an awful vision, the judgment-seat, as it were, set up, and himself arraigned as a prisoner before it.

## 2. *Prospect of Judgment.*

What a prospect is this which rises up before him ! There is the great, white throne, and He that sitteth on it, before whose face the earth and the heavens have fled away. There are the dead, small and great, standing before GOD, and the books are opened, and the dead are there to be judged out of the things written in the Book, according to their works.<sup>2</sup> He sees himself one of that countless multitude, waiting his turn. Alas, what chance is there for him ? He knows he cannot answer for one of a thousand. And whom has he to take his part and plead for him ? His Advocate, He who should have been his Advocate has become his *Judge* ! Who is there to speak a word for him ? No one.

No one to speak for him ! But there is one to accuse him. Satan, the accuser, is there. By what

<sup>1</sup> Gen. iv. 13, 1 Sam. xiv. 43.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. xx. 12.

right the great enemy of God appears there in God's presence to accuse the sinner, we know not. But we gather from the beginning of the book of Job, the 3rd chapter of Zechariah, and Rev. xii., that the sins of men have given the devil some kind of right to appear as their accuser before God, perhaps much in the same way as the most worthless of men dare appear before the greatest Judges of the land, if he has a fair charge to bring against any one. One thing at least is certain, the devil is there at the judgment to accuse this unpardoned man. Nay more, the devil claims him as his for his sins. "He is mine," he declares, "mine of his own free choice and by a thousand sins. True I never did anything for him, never suffered for him, certainly never hung upon a cross for him. But he has served me, nevertheless. Assuredly he has done nothing for *Thee* or for heaven. He can never with justice be let in there. He belongs to me. Let me have him. Justice requires it." And so the sinner sees himself carried away by the great enemy to his house of imprisonment and torture. He hears his sentence ringing in his ears. Is it the more awful one, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire?" Or is it the less severe decree, "Thou shalt not come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing?"<sup>1</sup> Will his punishment be endless, or will it some distant day come to a close? Shall he find in hell the wherewithal to pay his debt and so be set free? Or will some one else be empowered to pay it for him after he has undergone perhaps ages of cap-

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. xxv. 41, v. 26.

tivity if not of anguish? He knows not and heeds not. For, indeed, when a man is in apprehension of the judgment-seat of God, he reckons not whether his punishment will be literally an everlasting one. At the very *best* he feels it is more than he can bear to think of. To be condemned to hell, that is, to the company of Satan and the vilest of mankind; to be doomed to that place of outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched,<sup>1</sup> where there are sure to be the horrors of remorse, whether accompanied or not with bodily torture! To be banished there at all, were it only for a day, the thought is *fearful*. To be driven from the light into the darkness, and cut off by a great gulf fixed from the bright home of the angels and of the saints; from those, too, one had known and admired and loved best amongst the sons and daughters of men; to be severed from them all and doomed to dwell with the scum of the universe. Great God! it is intolerable, it is unjust! Now as to the justice of it, that will all be explained and made good. We see every day now things that strike us as most unjust. Yet we believe, because we have been told, that God is Love. All will be explained. For the present *we know what shall be*, and we must *act* upon our knowledge. "Verily I say unto you, except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish."<sup>2</sup>

Such is then the fate which rises up before the awakened sinner. He sees himself hopelessly, to his

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. xxv. 30, S. Mark ix. 44, 46, 48.

<sup>2</sup> S. Luke xiii. 3.

mind perhaps unjustly, but still not the less *hopelessly*, condemned to the most fearful punishment of hell for the errors and sins of his life.

Now, I say, so long as he has this prospect before him, there can be no peace for him. The innocent who is to die to-morrow may present an image of serene and heavenly peace, such as is familiar in the picture of Beatrice Cenci or the last sleep of Argyle. Even the criminal may sleep soundly on the eve of the gallows, grown dull and feelingless through habits of sin. But the aroused and convicted sinner can be the subject of no real and of no delusive peace. Only in one way can tranquillity return to him, viz., through pardon and the blotting out by the hand of God Himself of all his guilt and all his fears.

### 3. *Misery of Conviction of Sin.*

Till then there is only misery for him, because, do what he will, he can no longer put away from himself the future.

Perhaps he wishes he had never seen it revealed in its awfulness. He may look back with regret to the dreamy unconsciousness out of which he has been so rudely shaken. He may envy the thousands of his fellow-creatures who are still living in a waking dream, saying, "Peace," where there is only dull forgetfulness. But though he envy, he can no longer imitate them. For now he knows, if not enough for happiness, at least too much for indifference; enough, alas, at present for extreme distress. For as there is no worse evil in the world than sin, so is there no keener pain than the knowledge of sin.

Men feel in different degrees the force of sin ; some have deeper natures than others, or more power to realise. In other words, it pleases God the HOLY GHOST, for reasons of His own, to give more incisive feelings concerning sin to some than to others. But in proportion as sin is felt, so is the misery until peace is found.

We see in the Psalms what strong views of sin and consequent distress the HOLY SPIRIT was pleased to impart to King David and the rest of those inspired writers, both for their own sake, and for the benefit of all who should come after. Never will any man feel sin more than they did, and never will any need stronger words than they supply in which to express the misery it brings.

What a depth of anguish lies in such words as these :—"O LORD, rebuke me not in Thine anger, neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure." "Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am weak : O LORD, heal me, for my bones are vexed." "My soul is also sore vexed." "But Thou, O LORD, how long?"

Or again. "Mine iniquities have taken such hold upon me, that I am not able to look up. They are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me. Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me." "O my GOD, my soul is cast down within me. My tears have been my meat day and night." "We consume away in Thine anger, and are afraid of Thy wrathful indignation." "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O LORD. If Thou, LORD, shouldst be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O LORD, who may abide it?" "Day and night Thine hand was



heavy upon me." "Thine arrows stick fast in me, and Thy hand presseth me sore." "I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly, I go mourning all the day long." "I am weary of my crying, my throat is dry, mine eyes fail while I wait for my GOD." "Let not the waterflood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me."<sup>1</sup>

Happily those Psalms end invariably with a note of consolation or of triumph, and the use of them will help the penitent to feel sure that he will soon be comforted.

The mere fact that he is sore distressed and unhappy, is indeed a sign that the HOLY SPIRIT is dealing with him, and leading him by ways he knows not, into the larger room of Christian joy, and liberty, and the peace passing understanding. He knows, instructed by his wretchedness, that he is no longer absolutely *dead* in trespasses and sins, for his misery is a sign of returning animation.

Yon traveller on that snowy plain is fast falling a victim to the deadly frost. Inexpressible weariness and languor have seized him, and a desire to sleep. At length he yields—he sits down in the snow—he is fast dozing off,—ah, if he sleeps, it will be "the sleep that knows no breaking." You go up to him,—he is almost gone. You use every means to revive him. At length he shows signs of returning consciousness. And now an intense agony seizes upon every nerve of his body,—it is the agony of returning life, excruciating pain indeed, but better surely than the painless-

<sup>1</sup> Psalms vi., xl., xc., cxxx., xxxii., lxix.

ness of fast approaching death. And the man whose sin has found him out is like that traveller. It is a time of bitter pain and sore soul distress until he finds peace in believing. But better far that misery than the painlessness of fast approaching death,—mental, spiritual, *eternal* death.

#### 4. *The Prospect of Death.*

“From a sudden, evil, and unprepared death, good LORD, deliver us.”

Many who do not realize in this manner the coming Judgment and its awful issues, and who know nothing of the sinfulness and misery of sin, are nevertheless strangers to peace through the prospect of dying. “Men through fear of death,” says the Apostle, “are all their lifetime subject to bondage.”<sup>1</sup> It is the bondage of a vague and nameless dread, of the apprehension of something coming upon them which they cannot escape, which they know not how to meet. Were a tourist in the Alps assured that ere the day was over an avalanche would suddenly descend upon himself and his party and that possibly all might perish, then, neither the bright sunshine nor the glorious sweeps of vision, nor the grand old mountain peaks cutting the clear blue sky, nor the bracing air, nor the bright and many coloured Alpine flowers could keep his spirit calm throughout the day. If he could only *forget* what was coming, he might have peace, but he can have none so long as he remembers. And how can a man have peace, remembering he must die, and feeling that death may be his destruction?

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ii. 15.

Now it is from a guilty conscience this fear of dying springs. The man does not know he is forgiven, hence he is afraid to die, because that will bring him into the presence of God, Whom he has offended and not yet appeased. There are, it is to be feared, hundreds of thousands of christened men and women who are in this unsatisfactory state of mind and feeling.

If the clergyman in his visits from house to house along the crowded streets of his parish, or in passing from sick bed to sick bed, or in speaking to one or another of his parishioners in health, endeavours, like a wise physician, to ascertain the condition of the souls committed to his charge, he will find that many of them are in very indifferent spiritual health, that is, *are not at peace*. They know they must die and are afraid, because they are unforgiven. "If only I knew that my sins were forgiven, I should not be afraid to die." This will be a very general declaration; though from a few he will hear the contrary testimony, "I am not afraid to die now, I know that God has forgiven me, and I try not to sin any more, and I feel sure He will help me." Now if the Gospel is good news and deliverance from fear, is it not most earnestly to be wished that all professing Christians should believe it, and be able to bear a similar testimony? Then would they be ready to enter upon their inheritance of peace with GOD in CHRIST.

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## CHAPTER IV.

## RETURN TO PEACE.

“Thou wilt show me the path of life.”—Ps. xvi. 11.

**I**T has been seen that guilt on the conscience, whether realised or not—in a word, unforgiven sin—is a certain foe to peace. Guilt, like an armed man, stands with sword drawn before the palace gate of the King of Peace, and those who ought to enter in must remain without. How is this obstruction to be removed? By obedience to God. “If thou wouldst hearken to My commandments, then should thy peace be as a river.” But which commandment must I hearken to?

Now in reply to this, we must first of all consider that the words of the prophet indicate that perfect peace is only for those who hearken to, that is, earnestly strive to fulfil *all* God’s commandments.

But there will be a special peace for those who are conscious that they have a special need and who seek for this peace by obeying the commandment best fitted to meet that need; whilst, again, we may well believe that there will be some measure of peace for whosoever honestly tries to obey *any one* of God’s commandments.

Thus there will be—

I. Perfect peace for the perfectly obedient (not entirely attainable here below.)

II. Special peace for the obedient to special com-

mands, (peace with GOD for the penitent and believing.)

III. Some peace for the obedient to any commandment of GOD.

*1. Peace through obedience.*

To take this last first, I would urge upon every reader of this book who desires to find peace, to set to work at once to obey one or other of GOD's commandments. We know that His Spirit guides all His chosen and is ever pointing out to them what He willeth they should do. "Them that are meek He guides in judgment, and such as are gentle them shall He learn His way."<sup>1</sup> Let then the man who is looking upwards for guidance, take the first step that is pointed out,—“Do the duty that lies nearest thee,”—put away the first evil thing thou canst think of, and set about doing the opposite good thing. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts.”<sup>2</sup> Whatever may be dark and doubtful, this must be right, that he who hath done evil should learn to do well, that each one should practise the contrary virtue to his besetting sin, that the covetous should give to the poor, the ill-tempered answer softly, the indolent do with his might what his hand findeth to do, the impure cease from evil thoughts, and the dishonest put away his false weights and cease to adulterate his goods. Whatever may be the issue in Eternity, it must be good to be truthful and loving and self-governed in time.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxv. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. lv. 7.

The following anecdote which Dr. Tholuck of Halle used to tell his students, and which I have often repeated to sceptics—I trust with some results—will illustrate this. A barrister was in doubt as to the truth of Revelation. Somehow, all the ordinary evidences of the Divinity of JESUS and the eternal truth of His Religion did not seem to satisfy his mind. Being a thoughtful and earnest man, he could not rest satisfied amid this mist of doubt, but ever looked to see the sun break through. And so one day he was reading in S. John, and came upon the words (vii. 17,) “If any man will do His will” (*wills* to do His will) “he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of GOD or whether I speak of Myself.” This, he thought to himself, is a plain enough test to apply to the religion of CHRIST. I will try to do GOD’s will as CHRIST has set it forth by precept and example, and see what comes of it. And so he set himself to obey the sayings, and imitate the character of JESUS, trying to make his conduct towards his fellow-men as much as possible similar in tone and temper to what CHRIST’s was. And he found himself becoming more kind and gentle in his manner and more earnest in the work of his life, alike more prayerful and more diligent. And as he marked this change coming over him, he gave glory to GOD and said, that the Religion which produced such results must be indeed Divine. He determined to take JESUS for his SAVIOUR and his Master, and soon found joy and peace in believing.

In keeping of GOD’s commandments then, be it the greatest or the least, in keeping of any one of His commandments however imperfectly, the man hitherto

neglectful will find some measure of peace. The HOLY SPIRIT is ever prompting men to give obedience to one or other of His commandments, and every time they respond to those Divine inspirations, they advance a step. Therefore I would say to any doubting and burdened Christian, "Why sit there moping in the darkness, rise, walk out into the light. Do the duty which comes first to hand. It will be at least a step towards the fulness of peace. Yet, be persuaded, even before you take that first step, to lift up your heart in prayer. He has said, 'Ask, and it shall be given thee.' " And surely it is very natural to pray.

Of ourselves we know neither what our first duty is, nor how to set about the doing of it. But He in Whose work we are about to engage will not fail us if we ask His help, and then in obedience to His call, take the first step towards the fulness of His joy.

But, Christian, be sure you do really take that first step as He points out to you. You know your first duty : you dare not leave it undone, because it is hard, or say it will do as well some later day. Not to act *at once* on GOD's inspirations, is to resist His Spirit and risk your everlasting salvation. For duty known and not done hardens the heart ; and good intentions, as the very proverb declares, are what pave the way to hell.

## 2. *Peace with God.*

"Ye shall find Me when ye shall search for Me with all your heart."—Jer. xxix. 13.

We have seen that a measure of peace is vouchsafed to the man who begins to obey any of GOD's com-

mandments ; now let us consider that *special* peace known in the Bible as “peace with GOD,” (Rom. v. 1,) which is for him who obeys the special commandments fitted to produce it. The peace which means the removal of guilt from the conscience, the blotting out of the sentence of condemnation, free and full forgiveness for all that is past ; an assurance that “JESUS died *for me*,” and that “He is the LORD my Righteousness ;” a knowledge that I am reckoned amongst the sons to whom “the LORD imputeth not iniquity :” this is the peace for which a man yearns when his sin has found him out and the Future claims his attention. He wishes to know that he is a forgiven man, and that if he were to die to-night, he should have no cause of fear. He longs to believe that he has been restored to good relations with his Almighty Creator and Judge, and that the GOD of love is once more his Friend—through the removal of that great barrier of unpardoned sin which now rises between the Holy One and his own forlorn and solitary soul. Which commandment must he obey to attain this blessed consciousness ?

Now on opening our Prayer Book, we read—or the very next time we go to Church we shall hear—these words, “He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly REPENT and unfeignedly BELIEVE His holy Gospel.”

There are these two conditions of pardon, Repentance, and Faith. In other words, the commandments to be hearkened to, in order to forgiveness and peace, are these—Repent, Believe. These indeed are the two special New Testament commands which meet us



as we approach the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST. Our Blessed LORD, heralded by the Baptist preaching Repentance, began His own ministry with the call, "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand ;" "Except ye repent," He said later, "ye shall perish." And He came also preaching Faith—"This is the work of GOD, that ye believe on Him whom He has sent ;" "he that believeth on the SON hath everlasting life." His Apostles likewise, when they went out to found the Church, began with this word, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted," and went on with this second mandate, "Believe in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and thou shalt be saved." That these two subjects were the main doctrine taught by the Apostles we see clearly from the practice of S. Paul, who thus sums up his three years' ministry at Ephesus. "I have showed you and have taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, Repentance toward GOD, and Faith toward our LORD JESUS CHRIST."<sup>1</sup>

*First Condition of Peace with God, Repentance.*

"FATHER, I have sinned against Heaven and in Thy sight."  
—S. Luke xv. 21.

Here then is the first commandment to be obeyed if the sinner would have peace with conscience and with GOD.

Repent.—The original of the word means simply, change your mind. You have erred in choosing self

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. iv. 17 ; S. Luke xiii. 3 ; S. John vi. 29 ; Acts iii. 19, xvi. 31, xx. 20, 21.

or anything selfish for your God. You have taken a wrong view and made a grave mistake, and missed the whole purpose of your existence. By this great error you have done dishonour to the God you came from, and in Whom you lived, moved, and had your being. You have grieved His fatherly heart. You have acted unkindly and undutifully to Him Who wishes nothing but your happiness, Who made you for your happiness. Will you not then condemn yourself and your past life? Will you not resolve to amend your life by choosing to live as God's servant for all time to come? Too long you have served self and sin. Would you not be "set free from sin and become a servant to God?" then you would "have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

Consider further. You know JESUS died for your sins. Well, you have sinned just as if He had never died. You have done what you could to frustrate His object and make His death useless. You have pierced the heart of Him Who loved you so well as to die for you. Instead of being "constrained by His love to live for Him,"<sup>1</sup> you have been constrained by your own selfishness to "crucify Him afresh."<sup>2</sup> Where are all your old resolutions and vows? Where your promise to "renounce all CHRIST'S enemies, and to keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of your life?"<sup>3</sup> Broken a thousand times. You have vowed to God, and have not kept it. Judge yourself then and condemn yourself. Say you regret it has been so; you will not have it so any

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. vi. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Confirmation Service.

more. "I will arise and go to my FATHER, and will say unto Him, FATHER, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son."

But you may say, How can I repent? I do not feel my sins, I cannot feel that I am so far wrong, or that I have done anything very bad. I answer—(but first let me beg of you to *pray* for grace to understand things rightly, to see them as GOD sees them, and that you may not be blinded or deceived: *Save us, O God, from selfish prejudices and fore-judgments in favour of our selfish selves and against Thee:*)—Now consider, you can only be sorry for what you have done by reflecting on what you ought to have done. You can only be ashamed of what you are by reflecting on what you ought to have been.

You will ascertain this by considering the Divine Law which was the expression of the Will of GOD for you, and which was, in a word, that you should love GOD with all your heart, and your neighbour as yourself. And in order to understand this better, you must think a good deal about JESUS CHRIST Who obeyed that law perfectly in everything, and was a Pattern for us all. He was the Perfect Man, the Divine Ideal of Humanity, in Whose Image man was made, and after Whose Image GOD is seeking to restore him.

In JESUS of Nazareth you will see the Perfection of obedience to GOD's Law. "I delight to do Thy will, O My GOD, yea, Thy Law is within My heart."

The more you study His character and dwell upon His actions, the more you will be sensible of the con-

trast between you and Him, and the more you will see cause for sorrow when you consider what you are and what you have done. See, for instance, how devoted He is to GOD, ever about His FATHER'S business, which it is meat and drink for Him to do. GOD is evidently the centre of all His being. His thoughts, words, and deeds all are occupied directly or indirectly about fulfilling His will, all are done to His glory. Whether in making Him known to man in all His love, His holiness, His power, or whether in suffering patiently at His hands, in all things the soul of JESUS is in closest fellowship with the FATHER Who is truly the Sun of His Life. Never indeed was there such another as He. But all were intended to be like Him. And it is the misery of our race that we have fallen so far below this high perfection. And not only our misery, also our *guilt*.

But how my *guilt*? It was not possible for me, born in sin and with an evil nature to contend with from the first, to be perfectly obedient like JESUS, "Who was conceived by the HOLY GHOST," and born without any tendency to sin, Who was "holy, harmless" all through, and "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth."

This is true, but not less true is it, and each man's conscience will endorse the statement, that he might have been much *more like* CHRIST in character and conduct, in feelings and disposition, than he has been. He might have been—and here is his guilt—more obedient to GOD, less selfish, and less a sinner than he is by a thousand fold, had he tried. How many a time has he not silenced the voice of conscience

and of the HOLY SPIRIT within him, bidding him stop in a train of evil thought or a course of wayward behaviour. How many acts of obedience has he not neglected through sloth, or selfishness, or fear of man. Assuredly if he could not have been perfectly obedient like JESUS, he might have been far better than he is had he continued in the good way in which he was set, and used diligently the means of grace provided. This is true of us all, and therefore to us belongeth shame and confusion of face. We must repent and turn from our iniquities, for, whitewash them as we may, they are without excuse before GOD.

But the great means to attain the grace of repentance as well as all other spiritual gifts, is to *ask* for it. Convinced that Repentance is an indispensable condition of salvation, without which faith and attempted amendment of life will be very superficial work,—like the seed sown in stony places, having no root in itself, sure to wither away almost as fast as it has grown up,—the child of GOD must ask this Gift from his heavenly FATHER.

And he will not doubt his being heard, or imagine that, any more than if a son asks bread, his father will put him off with a stone, GOD in Heaven will give him something else in place of what he asks. Let him then ask in faith, with a steady purpose, really desiring to receive. Nor let him be vexed if the measure of reply he gets be less than he expected,—he may be sure it will be as much as he needs. Deeper views of his shortcomings and deeper sorrow may come later, if GOD think fit to give them. But He Who was content with that feeling of unworthiness

and that cry for mercy from the prodigal son; He Who opened Paradise to the penitent thief on his owning the justice of his dying pains, and beseeching the LORD to remember him when He came in His Kingdom, will—can we doubt it?—be satisfied with what measure of Repentance He Himself vouchsafes to give in answer to the humble earnest prayer of His own much loved and longed-for child.

Then “take with you words, and turn to the LORD; say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.”<sup>1</sup>

Or use some such little prayer as this,—“O my GOD, teach me to know my sins, and make me sorry for them.”

Or this,—“O my GOD, I grieve that I have offended Thee, give me grace to do so no more.”

Or again this,—“O Lamb of GOD that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon me.”

I do not dwell on the usual Church-division of Repentance, into contrition, (sorrow for sin,) confession of it (not necessarily to a priest), and satisfaction, (amendment of life,) for I am not writing a theological treatise, but a plain statement of the most direct way to Peace. The uses of such divisions and of whatever else GOD has inspired to holy men for the profit of His Church, will unfold themselves to the Christian in the course of his growth in grace.

<sup>1</sup> Hos. xiv. 2.

*Second Condition of Peace, Believing in Jesus.*

“LORD, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.”—S. Matt. viii. 2.

The second commandment to be obeyed in order to peace is this, “Believe in the LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

This command is urged in almost every page of the New Testament. Our Blessed LORD said to the Jews, “This is the work of GOD, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.” To the blind man He had restored to sight, He put the crucial question, “Dost thou believe on the SON of GOD?” After this example the Apostles when they preached “Repent,” preached also “Believe on the SON of GOD.” S. Philip baptised the Ethiopian nobleman on his declaring his belief that JESUS CHRIST is the SON of GOD. S. Paul especially enforces the necessity of faith in CHRIST as the condition of justification and forgiveness, and consequently of peace.<sup>1</sup>

Now what is the meaning of this command as given to the awakening Christian? For may he not justly say, “‘All this have I kept from my youth, what lack I yet?’ From my childhood I have said, ‘I believe in JESUS CHRIST His only SON our LORD,’ and ‘I believe in GOD the SON, Who hath redeemed me and all mankind.’ I have not the least doubt that JESUS was the SON of GOD, or that He died on the Cross for us sinners. I have obeyed this commandment to believe, and yet I cannot pretend to have peace?”

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvi. 31 ; S. John vi. 29 ; ix. 35 ; Acts viii. 37 ; Rom. v. 1.

But we have seen there are *two* commandments to be obeyed for peace with GOD—Believing and Repenting. You say you believe, have you *repented*? For you are required not only to believe *about* CHRIST, but to believe *in* CHRIST as your SAVIOUR, and it is impossible really to do this without feeling that you have sins to be saved from. There is a shallow Religionism abroad at the present day which would overleap repentance and land you at once in full possession of peace through believing. These experiences may be fervid, but are without a solid foundation. To believe in JESUS really implies a humbling sense of my sinfulness and my need of Him as my SAVIOUR. I must feel grieved that I have broken GOD's law, and that my sins have caused the death of my Substitute. At the same time I fully rely upon Him not only as the world's SAVIOUR, but as my own, believing that what He did in dying He did not only for *all* the world, but for *me*, and believing that the work He completed on the Cross avails not only for others, but for me, and has taken away all my sins.

“Who is He, LORD, that I might believe on Him?”

But here we must pause in the presence of this august Person Whom the sinner is permitted, nay, commanded, to believe in, to trust, and to unite himself with in the closest manner, finding in Him pardon and peace. Who is JESUS CHRIST? Let us seek our answer in the Creed of Christendom,—“I believe in our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the only-begotten SON of GOD, begotten of His FATHER before all worlds, GOD of GOD, Light of Light, Very GOD of very GOD, Be-



gotten, not made, Being of one Substance with the FATHER ; By Whom all things were made, Who for us men, and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the HOLY GHOST of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the FATHER. And He shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead : Whose kingdom shall have no end."

This then is the Divine and Human Person Whom the penitent must believe in. Who He is, these words of the Nicene Creed set forth before him. First, they bring before him the extreme and unspeakable dignity of the Godhead of CHRIST JESUS, and then the extreme condescension of His most holy Incarnation—the SON of GOD become Man. Why this amazing condescension?

Now there was a Divine necessity for this, although there is more in it than our powers of reason can fully understand. First, we are told that "without shedding of blood there could be no remission."<sup>1</sup> This lesson was taught to man from the beginning. Sin could not be done away without a death. Abel offered unto GOD a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, because, realising that the atonement of sin must be by blood, he offered of the firstlings of his flock. By faith the Patriarchs offered sacrifices for two thousand years, and Abraham was willing at GOD's command even to offer up his son. Then all

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ix. 22.

the Jewish system of worship, which was revealed to Moses by Almighty GOD, centred round sacrifice and blood. The peace-offering, the trespass-offering, and the sin-offering were all slain when presented, in token of the sinner's sense of having forfeited his life by his sin. And day by day, morning and evening, in the temple worship, a lamb was slain, typical of that "Lamb of GOD Who taketh away the sins of the world."<sup>1</sup>

These sacrifices<sup>2</sup> were inadequate of themselves to take away sin : they received their virtue and efficacy from the one offering of CHRIST ; they were accepted by GOD because offered in obedience, and peace, the fruit of pardon, was to the Jew the sign of their acceptance.

But it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins or really restore peace between GOD and man.<sup>3</sup> Then said the Eternal SON, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O GOD."<sup>4</sup> By fulfilling all GOD's Will, even to the death on the Cross, the SON of GOD took away sins and restored peace. "By His one offering of Himself, He perfected the sanctified," and "made an end of sins, and made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness."<sup>5</sup>

"The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed."<sup>6</sup>

And it is because He came to make peace that He was called long before His Coming the Prince of

<sup>1</sup> S. John i. 29.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. x. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Dan. ix. 24.

<sup>2</sup> See Hebrews.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. x. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Isa. liii. 5.

Peace, and it was said that "of the increase of His peace there should be no end."<sup>1</sup> The angel-song heralding His birth told of "Peace on earth,"—blessed fruit of His Advent. "Behold upon the mountains the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace." As an outward sign of this great truth we may surely interpret the fact that at His birth Rome for the third brief interval in her long history, had laid down her arms over all the earth. "He came and preached peace," says the Apostle, "to those which were afar off, and to those which were nigh." "For it pleased the FATHER that in Him should all fulness dwell, and having made peace through the blood of His Cross by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself."<sup>2</sup>

Now in order to have peace with GOD, we are commanded to believe this about our SAVIOUR. I must believe that JESUS is the SON of GOD, and that He gave up His life for my sins, and I am justified freely by His grace. Does one ask, Why must I believe this? Is it not reason sufficient that GOD has commanded thee? that He has said by His holy apostles that "through this Man is preached unto thee the forgiveness of sins, and by Him all that believe are justified?"<sup>3</sup> GOD hath set this blessed and adorable SAVIOUR as His King on His holy hill of Sion, ready to dispense full and free forgiveness to all who ask. What further reason can be needed for at once repairing to this King and accepting the mercy which He extends alike to the vilest and the most self-righteous of sinners, if they will only draw near in

<sup>1</sup> Isa. ix. 6, 7.<sup>2</sup> Col. i. 19, 20.<sup>3</sup> Acts xiii. 38.

faith and penitence, casting aside all their own righteousnesses, which are as filthy rags, and expecting to be saved only by His most free and all-enfolding grace?

Since these things are so ; since all that is necessary for peace with GOD is to repent and believe the gospel ; since the way of return to an offended GOD is no longer barred by sins, but is open to all, it cannot be less than a great iniquity in His sinful creatures to hold back, and refuse to be friends with GOD. It is surely strangely perverse and hard-hearted in sinners thus to delay making their peace, or rather, accepting the peace already made. They may pretend they are "not good enough" to approach GOD and claim His mercy in CHRIST. But such pretended respect for GOD is real dislike. "How can any one become good until he comes to GOD to make him so?"<sup>1</sup> Verily, they can have no thirst after the righteousness of GOD who offer such a plea.

### *The Prince of Peace.*

JESUS, Who was foretold by Isaiah as the Prince of Peace ; JESUS, over Whose advent the angels sang their song of peace, came to be "our Peace," because He came to reconcile us to our FATHER in Heaven. "Behold upon the mountains the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace !" And He came not only to make peace between us and our offended GOD, by taking away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, He came also to shed abroad His peace in

<sup>1</sup> Geo. Macdonald.

our hearts and lives. He came to rule in the midst of His and our enemies, and as His dominion advances in the individual and in the race, so does peace increase.

In a word, the LORD JESUS is the Fountain of Peace for man. It is, therefore, natural to expect that He was Himself an Incarnation of this Divine thing. And so the pages of the Gospel reveal Him. Peace was His, and without measure. In it He dwelt; it was the air He breathed. From Him it passed to all who came within His personal influence. If we think upon His character as revealed in the Gospel, we shall feel that calm self-possession and complete repose characterize Him. Not the torpor of indifference, like the silence of the ice-bound Arctic seas, but the peace of a Divine enthusiasm. There was throughout perfect harmony of powers and emotions, and, even when angry, entire self-control. Hence peace evermore dwelt with Him, flowed forth from Him upon those around.<sup>1</sup> Deeply did His blessed Mother drink thereof, though a sword was in the end to pierce her soul. Those He called from the receipt of custom or their boats, found in Him that peace which the world could not give. The sick whom He healed, the demoniacs whom He set free from their tormentor, the weary whom He called to Him, the sinful whom He pardoned, all tasted of that peace. Every one, in fact, who came within the light of His holy presence, went away with some measure of peace in their hearts. That is, all whose

<sup>1</sup> See my translation of Ullmann's *Sinlessness of CHRIST*, page 65.

souls were open to that light, for to the most impenitent, the wilful and disobedient, even He could give no peace ; as to the rocky, rugged mountain-top the sunshine and the dews of heaven can impart nothing of the flowery verdure which adorns the vales below.

And still the Prince of Peace, because He is the mighty God and the Father of the Ages,<sup>1</sup> draws with the same power to Himself the weary and heavy-laden hearts which are directed to Him. He satisfies their souls with His goodness, and makes them glad with the light of His countenance.

What an inconceivable blessing it is for our race that He Who is the Redeemer of man is also the Prince of Peace, and that we are called to believe and trust our cause to One Who is so infinitely attractive and Divine. Had Almighty God given us some one as a mediator between Him and us, and as His vicegerent in our world, with whom we could have had no sympathy and for whom we could have felt no admiration, it would have been a difficult thing for us to render Him anything but a formal homage, and to give more than an intellectual acceptance of His work on our behalf. But this is not the case. The SON of GOD appears in our midst full of the most attractive grace and truth, with the veiled glory of the Godhead and the best charms of perfect manhood, and so powerful and so winning is He, that any candid mind who loves the truth better than the world, has only to know Him in order to love.

Let me give an instance of how a soul which had

<sup>1</sup> Isa. ix. 6.

found only distraction and misery in the world, was led to acquaint herself with Him, and was at peace.

In the year 1866 an English chaplain was stationed at a watering place on the Rhine, and one day there appeared at the *table d'hôte* three new visitors, one of whom was a young lady, on whose pale features there seemed to rest the touch of early death. Naturally drawn by the instinct of Christian love to seek the society and engage the interest of one so fair and so fragile, and who to all appearance must soon be called to other scenes, the chaplain was not long in ascertaining her history, which was indeed full of sadness. A child of fashion and of the world, she had lived a vain and fruitless life, until affliction in its keenest form had arrested her career, and her health had withered with the blight of disappointed love. The man to whom she had plighted her troth had forsaken her, and might be seen driving with her rival through the streets of the city where she had dwelt. Intense hatred of her supplanter burned in her breast, and all the false peace of a life of vanity had vanished in the tumult of passion and vindictiveness. This hatred, the reader may think, was not unnatural, but not the less did it render her ill-fitted for the Kingdom of the Prince of Peace, Who hath said, that "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your FATHER which is in Heaven forgive you your trespasses." But withal, she was of a gentle and kindly nature; and when she was told of the Perfect One, Whose attractive beauty is displayed in the pages of the Gospel, and Whose love could be more to her than all the world if she would but accept it, she did not harden

her heart against her SAVIOUR ; she lent her ear to listen. At first, however, there was a difficulty. She had heard in the gay world wherein she had moved, of the insidious arguments of the enemies of CHRIST, who sought to prove Him to be only a man instead of the living GOD Incarnate. But when it was explained to her that JESUS had called Himself the SON of GOD, One with the FATHER, and allowed His disciples to call Him LORD and GOD, and that One so good as the Gospel shows Him to have been could never have done this if it had not been true,—she was not slow to accept the necessary conclusion, that the Son of Mary was the SON of GOD. And consequently she saw that it was her first duty to adore Him and surrender herself to Him in loving obedience ; and so she came to find rest for her soul in Him.

One day a number of the visitors went on an excursion to a place in the neighbourhood, and after a happy day, (not passed without some interesting conversation on the character and work of CHRIST,) as the shades of evening fell, and the party, now far on their way home, had stopped to bait their horses at a wayside hotel, and they were sitting round the little garden tables on the banks of the Rhine, the HAND of GOD struck down that bright young life,—she burst a blood-vessel, and to the grief and dismay of all was carried, as they thought dying, into the hotel. She rallied before long, but of course was too ill to proceed on her journey. Leaving her with some relations, the rest of the party prepared to depart, while the chaplain went to see her and offer a brief prayer



by her bedside. She then expressed her entire resignation to her FATHER'S Will, and evidently showed that in that hour of vexation and weakness the peace of CHRIST was in possession of her soul.

After this event she somewhat recovered, and got sufficiently well to be taken home to England. But before many months had elapsed, her spirit passed away. In a peaceful home, amid loving relations, changed completely in disposition, with heart and mind fixed on things above, and fortified in her last moments by the sweet Sacrament of love, she left this scene of trial and probation for the calm rest of Paradise—for that land where the inhabitant shall no more say, "I am sick," and where all who dwell therein are forgiven their iniquity.

### *A Visit to the Cross.*

Further to help the Christian to realise what it is to believe in JESUS, let us approach this sacred subject from another side, and think upon the Death of CHRIST,—that wondrous Death, by which the LORD of Glory purchased our life.

Come with me, then, Christian, to the Cross of Calvary. What, a Christian, and yet never reflecting on the dying of the LORD JESUS? Recall at least now for once that scene of sorrow and of love to which on many Good Fridays you have been invited to devote your most solemn and tender thoughts.

"Behold the SAVIOUR on the Cross,  
A Spectacle of woe !

See from His agonising wounds  
The blood incessant flow."

Look upon the Lamb of GOD bearing the sins of the world. See, He hangs outstretched on that bed of anguish; His Head is crowned with thorns; His Face is stained with blood; His Hands and Feet are pierced with nails. Let your eye rest in loving sympathy on that Divine Countenance, marred more than any man, and see what patience and what nobleness is there, what heroic endurance, what calm self-surrender to GOD! Listen now with awe to His cry of forsakenness, "My GOD, My GOD, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and remember as you listen, He had become *sin* for us, Who knew no sin, and therefore it was that GOD the FATHER Who "cannot look upon sin" had in that dread moment hid His Face from Him—from Him, His Only-begotten, His Beloved SON.

But the cloud passes away. His offering is accepted, and the FATHER is well pleased with His perfect obedience in our stead. And conscious of His approval of His Sacrifice, the SAVIOUR cries, "It is finished." These words uttered by the dying lips, oh, wonder, in a loud voice, are followed by a parting commendation of Himself into His FATHER's Hands. When JESUS had cried with a loud voice, He said, "FATHER, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit;" and having said this He gave up the Ghost.<sup>1</sup>

Think, then, of this wondrous scene. Meditate upon the sufferings and death of Him Who was GOD

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke xxiii.

and Man. Think how that He was the Second Adam, the GOD-appointed Head and Chief of mankind, that He suffered for all men, especially for those who should be baptised into His name and signed with His Cross—suffered, therefore for *you*. Think, too, if none but He the eternal SON could finish such a work as your redemption, then how *great* a work must that be! And, if the Holy One *must* suffer so much, how fearful a thing sin must be.

But again, reflect, if the SON of GOD was *willing* to suffer thus for you, how great, how infinite His love for you must be. Since, then, He loves you so much, cast yourself into His arms and resolve to be henceforth His and His only; resolve to *hate* and fight evermore against sin which necessitated so great a Death, and evermore to love and live for your LORD Who endured it. You will see that, even if you had not been His before, His by creation, and doubly His by Baptism and Confirmation, you would have to become His now.

“O give thyself then to Him full and free,  
Who full and freely gave Himself for thee.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus through the power of the HOLY GHOST a visit to Calvary will make a man believe in JESUS with his whole heart. To any one who sought to understand these two things, Sin and Love, I would say, Read the account of the Crucifixion in the Gospel, or take your place before a crucifix, and *think*, with prayer for the SPIRIT's guiding, until the whole scene is before you, nay, becomes part of yourself, until you

<sup>1</sup> Spenser.

think yourself into CHRIST, losing yourself in Him. You will rise again presently to newness of life, saying, Henceforth I shall live for Him Who died for me, and wage war against that which caused His Death.

Once in my parish I was called to visit the sick bed of a young farmer who had been seized with a mortal illness. He had lived a thoughtless, jovial kind of life; a man generous and goodhearted, "nobody's enemy but his own." He had never done any harm to any one, he said, nor had he ever wished to. But when questioned as to his behaviour towards his Maker, Who had said to all His children, I would have you love Me with all your heart, ah, there he had to confess he had come short! Then the picture of his GOD dying to atone for his sins out of love to him was held up and presented before the opening eye of his soul. And in course of time he came to see what he had never seen before, the evil of sin, and to feel the transforming power of the love of CHRIST. There was a Mission going on in the parish at the time of his illness, and in the Mission a certain hymn touchingly setting forth this, was frequently sung. And I, touched by the hymn myself, sung in the half darkened church by the penitent sin-stricken congregation, would come away to the sick bed and repeat it to the poor man lying there. It seemed quite to meet his need, and he would often be heard saying the first verse of it:

" In evil long I took delight,  
Unawed by shame or fear,  
Till a new object met my sight,  
And stopped my wild career."

“ Ah, my ‘wild career,’ ” he would say, moved to tears with the thought of the Love which had forgiven that.

The hymn goes on :

- “ I saw one dying on a Tree  
In agony and blood,  
Who fixed His languid eyes on me  
As near His Cross I stood.
- “ Sure never till my latest breath  
Can I forget that look,  
It seemed to change *me* with His Death,  
Though not a word He spoke.
- “ My conscience felt and owned my guilt,  
And plunged me in despair,  
I saw my sins His blood had spilt  
And helped to nail Him there.
- “ Alas I know not what I did,  
Remorse and tears seemed vain,  
Where shall my guilty soul be hid?  
For I the LORD have slain.
- “ A second look He gave, which said,  
‘ I freely all forgive,  
My blood was for thy ransom paid,  
I died that thou mightst live.’
- “ Thus while His death reveals my guilt  
In all its blackest hue,  
Such is the mystery of grace,  
It seals my pardon too.”

Now to my poor dying friend this striking hymn became, as it were, a nail hit home on which the great truths of the Gospel could be hung, and by degrees he was led by the HOLY SPIRIT to see his sinfulness and the salvation that is in CHRIST. At

first indeed he thought that his own good works would help to win forgiveness, but on being shown how valueless they were to atone for so much as one sin, he said, "I see I must just throw them in too," and was content to take salvation as a pure gift of free and undeserved grace. He then was led to avail himself of the Church's provision for the penitent; he "opened his grief," and received the absolution of GOD. But he did not attain to peace until in the Blessed Sacrament he had received the Prince of Peace Himself under his roof. After Communion, his peace seemed even like a river bearing him quietly down to death's dark ocean, dark for him no longer. He often prayed, "may GOD save us from our wild careers and give us His peace. I'm a turned out man," he would say, "I'm a clean turned out man," by which he meant that he was quite changed in all the thoughts and feelings of his heart. One day on his wife bringing him his medicine he said, "No, no, my dear, no more medicine for me, I'm going to my heavenly FATHER's Home, and medicine canna keep me from there." One of the last requests was that the opening verse of the hymn which had been so blest to him should be put on his grave, and there engraved beneath the cross at the head of his poor earthen bed,—you may see it, dear reader, if ever you pass that way, in the sweet churchyard by the lovely mere in the parish of Lyneal, in the county of Shropshire.

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## CHAPTER V.

*THOUGHTS LEADING TO THE PATHS OF PEACE.*

**B**UT as concerning the obtaining peace through obedience to the commands to repent and believe in JESUS, we may look on the subject from another point of view, making our descent to the River of peace as it were from another mountain side. That River is indeed one, its calm waters flow deep and full of pardon through the work of CHRIST. But it may be approached along different tracks of thought, as the same River may be reached by following the course of different tributary streams.

Let us imagine the Christian beginning his journey towards peace in independent and solitary reflection. He sets out on his journey where the stream breaks away from its cold adamantine glacial source, and follows it over many a rough and rocky mountain-side, and anon through green and flowery glens until by many a winding nook it strays to join that blissful River. There has come a time in his life when the hard ice of youthful selfishness melting in the genial air of spring dissolves into the flowing waters of thought, which through many vicissitudes of experience, now more impetuously, now again more calmly, advances ever on its way to Peace.

It is a wonderful thing when the child of God first realises self-consciousness and feels what is implied in that little word "I." "I myself and no other thing or being in all the universe." Oh, what a sense

of solemnity and of awfulness does it impart to him to feel this. Then the questions of the universe begin to ask themselves, insisting upon being answered, "If I am I, what is this I which I am?"

"What am I, whence derived, and to what end?"

Puzzling, distracting questions indeed! If there be not the moonlight of Revelation to show the way, what danger of being lost for ever in the gloom of nature or led to stop reflection by fancying that nothing can be known for certain, and so there's no use trying. Without Revelation the mind is forced to some such melancholy conclusion or non-conclusion, as Göthe in that celebrated passage in Egmont so eloquently describes:

"Child, child, no more! As though driven by unseen spirits, the sun-horses of time tear along with the chariot of life, and there is nothing we can do but sit with courage holding fast the reins and turn aside the wheels, now from a rock, now from a chasm. Whither this chariot of our life is rushing who can tell? Scarcely indeed can we remember whence it came."

But to the Christian who believes in Revelation, there is light amid the gloom. Let us listen to his reflections and see how he finds through them the way of peace.

Here am I in this world, having lived so many years and being like others on my way to death. I wish to know who and what my Maker is, and in what relation I stand to Him. I am also conscious of having done wrong, and of having within me inclinations to



do wrong again. I wish to know how I am to be delivered from the transgressions of the past, and set free from all desire to transgress in the future. I feel that nothing will be a gospel to me, real good news, bringing peace to me, that does not answer all these questions.

Now such questions find their answer in our holy Religion, and chiefly in the Incarnation and the Death of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

The first question, "Who or what is my Maker?" is answered by the words, "GOD is a Spirit," "GOD is Love."<sup>1</sup> "GOD is a Spirit;" this reveals Him as a being like myself, who is conscious of His own existence, a self-conscious personal GOD. "A Spirit;" one then who can like myself think and reason, and determine and will, and have feelings and desires. And when I ask further, of what nature are His feelings and desires, what is the character of that Spirit, I am answered, "GOD IS LOVE." Enough, I am satisfied. This definition of the character of the Author and Ruler of the Universe, proved as it is by the Incarnation and the atoning Death of His Only-begotten SON, solves for me the mystery of my origin and fills my soul with light. If GOD is love, I feel it must be from love He made all things, and me among the rest.

I have heard indeed of a certain theological system which sets forth that GOD made all things for the sake of His Glory. But was not GOD ever perfect in His Glory? How then could creation increase what was already perfect? "Not increase it," says the system,

<sup>1</sup> S. John iv. 24 ; 1 S. John iv. 16.

The following anecdote which Dr. Theobald used to tell his students, and which I have repeated to sceptics—I trust with some success to illustrate this. A barrister was in doubt of the truth of Revelation. Somehow, all the evidences of the Divinity of JESUS and the efficacy of His Religion did not seem to satisfy him. Being a thoughtful and earnest man, he was not rest satisfied amid this mist of doubt, but he wished to see the sun break through. And so he was reading in S. John, and came upon (vii. 17.) “If any man will do His will” (i. e. His will) “he shall know of the doctrine which it be of GOD or whether I speak of Myself.” He thought to himself, is a plain enough rule to the religion of CHRIST. I will try to do as CHRIST has set it forth by precept and example, and see what comes of it. And so he set to obey the sayings, and imitate the character of CHRIST, trying to make his conduct towards his fellow-men as much as possible similar in tone and temper to CHRIST’S was. And he found himself becoming kinder and gentler in his manner and more earnest in his work of his life, alike more prayerful and more joyful. And as he marked this change coming over him, he gave glory to GOD and said, that the Religion which produced such results must be indeed Divine. He determined to take JESUS for his SAVIOUR and Master, and soon found joy and peace in his heart.

In keeping of GOD’S commandments then, the greatest or the least, in keeping of any of the commandments however imperfectly, the man

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1 S. John iv.  
Isa. lv. 11.

“manifest or show it forth.” The heavens declare the glory of God, and they and everything else were made solely that they might declare it. But for what purpose? I ask that system. Is God a Spirit who acts without a purpose? then is He less great than His creatures! which is absurd. To this Calvinism can give me no answer, so I am glad to be able to listen to S. John instead, and in his words, “God is love,” I have found an answer to the question, “Why is there anything created and made, and what are we all here for?”

“God is Love.” Now *love* I know is a feeling which longs to make others happy, finding its own happiness in theirs. I know this because I know that my love for my wife and child disposes me to make them happy, and finds delight in their happiness. And I can well understand how the Love of God should prompt Him to create beings like Himself in order that He might pour the fulness of His joy into them and rejoice in their joy. Thus the fact that God is love, revealed to me by His holy Apostle S. John, explains to me my existence here and the existence of all things around me.

But, further, it is evident that God’s love has been impeded in its outgoings by the free-will of the creatures He has made. Instead of receiving His love, instead of walking in that holy obedience to Him, in which condition alone they were capable of receiving it, they have gone astray, they have turned every one to his own way, choosing self for their God. This is sin, and the wages of sin is death.

I too have sinned, and therefore I deserve to die.

"But GOD commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners CHRIST died for us."<sup>1</sup>

"Herein is love, not that we loved GOD, but that He loved us, and sent His SON to be the propitiation for our sins."<sup>2</sup> The love of GOD is manifested in the gift of JESUS. "Hereby perceive we love, because He laid down His Life for us."<sup>3</sup> By thus dying for us CHRIST revealed *Love*. I had been told that GOD is love, and love I understood to be that which sought the happiness of others ; but from these words of S. John I learn that love is also, when it has to deal with sin and sorrow, a *self-sacrificing* thing, which even gives up its very life.

And as the love of the Omnipotent GOD cannot go forth in its self-sacrifice without accomplishing that whereto it is sent,<sup>4</sup> CHRIST, Who gave His Life as a propitiation to do away sin, must have really done it all away, and paid the whole of the debt due by sinners.

I see now that His self-sacrificing Love must have also paid all *my* individual debt, and as I have been taught to believe in one baptism for the remission of sins, and that CHRIST commanded the children to be brought to Him, and the Church has understood this of Baptism, and as I feel sure He Who is Infinite Love would not, and Infinite Holiness could not, suffer them to come without cleansing them from their sin, I believe that I in baptism was cleansed and made His own, and that the benefits of His Sacrifice were settled then on me.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 8.

<sup>2</sup> 1 S. John iii. 16.

<sup>3</sup> 1 S. John iv. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Isa. lv. 11.

And now, when I hear Him say, "Repent of thy sins, and believe on Me;" believe that GOD is love, and that I and the FATHER are one; believe that it was out of love to thee I made thee, and died for thee; trust Me implicitly henceforth; I am the LORD thy Righteousness; I gladly and gratefully obey this call of love, and now, "justified freely by His grace," forgiven, accepted, blest, "I have peace with GOD through JESUS CHRIST our LORD, and can rejoice in the hope of the glory of GOD."<sup>1</sup>

My questions are all answered now except the last, How shall I be set free from all desire to transgress in future? Now I can quite believe that He Who has died to obtain my pardon and to bring about my happiness, will not leave anything undone to complete His work. I can indeed without Him do nothing, but the Omnipotence of His love can accomplish all. He has also given unto me His HOLY SPIRIT to carry on in me the life of grace, to inspire holy thoughts, and give strength to fight against sin. Through His might I cannot fail to conquer, if I can only keep trusting Him, distrusting self, (the old usurper,) and walking in the way He Himself points out to me, "I will guide thee with Mine Eye,"<sup>2</sup> He has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." LORD, I rely on Thy promise. When I was not, out of love Thou didst make me; when I was lost, Thou for love didst die for me. Surely Thou wilt not let me perish. "None shall pluck me out of Thy Hand."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rom. iii. 24; v. 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xxxii. 8.

<sup>3</sup> S. John x. 28.

## CHAPTER VI.

*DIFFICULTY IN FINDING THE PATH OF PEACE  
OVERCOME.*

**I**F obedience to the commands to repent and believe in JESUS alone is sufficient to bring peace, how is it that there be so few who find it? For one would think nothing would be more natural to an intelligent man than to acknowledge his faults, and to accept the way out of them which his all-wise and Omnipotent Creator has provided. GOD Himself has done everything to restore peace between Himself and His creatures, even to the shedding of the Blood of His dear SON. *He* interposes no obstacles. Quite the contrary. Whence then is it that men hold back? The answer is, "An enemy hath done this." For though he never disturbs those who slumber under his leaden rule, Satan is very troublesome to the man who desires to arise and go to his FATHER. He does his very utmost to detain him ; he employs all his talent, the perverted talent of an angel, to prevent a man from finding peace through simple obedience. Through his power as, somehow, prince of this world, he contrives to make circumstances favour the man's continuing as he was. If he, however, determines that nothing shall keep him any longer in the wretched aimlessness of a life without GOD, but *will* arise and travel GOD-wards, then the enemy pursues him with doubts and misgivings. And never will he let him be *sure*, if he can help it, that he has actually gone to his

FATHER and received forgiveness. Hence we find persons who are really in earnest about peace, and who understand well that it is to be found in obedience to the command to repent and believe, still doubting whether they have repented and whether they have believed. If they could only *feel* they had, how happy they should be. Now some people say, "Never mind your feelings, have faith." This may sound very fine advice, but it seems as sensible as to say to a starving man, "Never mind your hunger, believe and live." People *must* mind their feelings, for without right and happy feelings, how can they live the true and holy life? if they do not feel peace, how can they be said to have it? if they do not feel pardon, of what use is it to them to be told, Oh, God forgives you?

Therefore the sin-laden soul *must* know himself forgiven as truly as the heavy debtor must feel his heart lightened by the news that his debt is paid. How is he to attain this?

Now we have seen that JESUS is the Prince of Peace, through Whom alone this blessing comes to sinful man; he must therefore have peace from Him. But how? Is not JESUS in heaven? True. But He promised also, and being Almighty GOD He can fulfil the promise, to remain on earth in the midst of His Church. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." He also promised to give Himself to His Church as her Spiritual Food. And He set apart a special occasion on which He should do this, viz. when His people should celebrate His dying love in the Holy Communion or the LORD's Supper. For



He Who said, "Whoso eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath eternal life," said also in the Institution of the Sacrament, "Take, eat, This is My Body : This is My Blood." And His servant S. Paul, writing in His Name, says of this holy service, "The Cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the Blood of CHRIST? the Bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of CHRIST?"<sup>1</sup>

Thus, JESUS CHRIST is in this Sacrament in some manner, and the soul may here hold communion with Him. Here, then, the sinful and the heavy laden may "come to JESUS." He needs not to say in his heart, "Who shall ascend into heaven? that is, to bring CHRIST down ;"<sup>2</sup> he is not called upon to seek or invent a CHRIST of his own imagination in the realms of air. He can approach the real CHRIST of the Bible in this Sacrament, and come into personal and unmistakeable relations with Him. Yes, he can *transact business* with JESUS CHRIST here in this Holy Communion—giving Him, what?—all he has to offer—his wants, his weariness, and his sins, and receiving from Him in exchange His peace, peace with God through Him, the blessed sense of pardon through His Blood.

Now, since the SAVIOUR is graciously pleased to come among us and give us in this Sacrament the peace we so much need, why should not every one who feels his sins and desires to believe in JESUS *seek Him there?*

The Church distinctly teaches in her Catechism that the Sacrament is a means whereby we receive

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. xxvi. 26 ; 1 Cor. x. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. x. 6.

grace—the grace we need. And how can the Christian, who is really in earnest, but who knows not if he has repented and believed sufficiently, and can feel no peace, how can he neglect a powerful means? Is it not culpable indolence or self-righteous pride (often misnamed humility) not to avail himself of what might be, *would* be a means whereby the peace passing understanding would reach him from the LORD?

And then, *is* it not a *command* binding upon all Christians, “This do, in remembrance of Me?” “Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you.”<sup>1</sup> And if JESUS has laid His commands on His disciples to eat of Him and live by Him, what right can a man have to expect peace who fails to do this? for surely it is only to him who hearkens to His commandments that the promise has been made, “Thy peace shall be as a river.”

Therefore if a man does not know whether he has repented enough or believes enough, let him at least be humble enough to obey honestly the words of CHRIST, and let him approach, nothing doubting. Let him think of CHRIST, and look only to CHRIST in this Sacrament, forgetting himself and his miseries, his unworthiness and want of satisfactory preparation, his fears as to whether he has any business there, his apprehensions as to his fellow-communicants, his misgivings as to being thought better than he knows himself to be, his thoughts about himself altogether; forgetful, I say, of self, and mindful only of the Prince

<sup>1</sup> S. John vi. 53.

of Peace standing there—to the eye of faith as visible as when He gave bread to the hungry multitudes—let him look unto Him and be fed. He shall certainly not be sent empty away; he shall receive a sure pledge of salvation; he shall know his sins forgiven and his pardon sealed. “‘My Beloved is mine,’ he can now say, ‘and I am His;’ CHRIST is in me now, and I in Him; the FATHER is well pleased with me now for His sake, and has forgiven me all that is past; and the HOLY SPIRIT is an earnest of my acceptance, and tells me that being in CHRIST, I am at peace with GOD.”

Then as the service concludes the last words which he hears are a prayer that the Peace of GOD may keep his heart and mind, and a declaration that the blessing of the Holy Trinity is upon him.

When, however, a person cannot quiet his conscience sufficiently to approach the Blessed Sacrament, when all arguments fail to convince him that the weary and heavy laden are invited, and that none who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be sent empty away; when he will not, or cannot, or dare not thus come to CHRIST directly in this Sacrament, what, it may be asked, is he to do? Go on in this state of uncertainty as to his acceptance? Impossible. If he tries it, he will sink back into indifference and unconcern. I can forget that there is a GOD, but remembering that there is a GOD, I cannot live if I do not know Him as my Friend. I might indeed still retain the intellectual belief that there was such a Being, but mere intellectual belief to one who has once hungered for a FATHER is utter unbelief. No, the mind of man

is not so constituted that it can *truly believe* in God, and go on existing without knowing that He is *my God*.

But we must not suppose that he can bear the thought of sinking back into his old indifference, which is indeed for all practical purposes a state of *atheism*. Then what is he to do? Has no provision, he asks, been made for such a case as mine? Has God forgotten me, and multitudes who feel exactly as I do? This would be *unlike Him*, indeed. What arrangement then has He made in His word for such as I, or what arrangement has He inspired His Church to make?

Now, in order that anxious souls might not go without the relief which is indispensable, the Redeemer when on earth gave power to man, in a sense to forgive sins. I say, *in a sense*, because absolutely considered, the Pharisees were right when they said none but GOD could forgive sins. For as sin is committed against GOD, so GOD alone can pardon it.

But GOD might delegate any one He pleased to forgive in His Name. Just as only a king can transact international business with another king, but he can send any ambassador he pleases. Thus CHRIST has sent His priests to transact business as His Ambassadors with the souls of men. "Now then we are ambassadors for CHRIST, as though GOD did beseech you by us: *we* pray you *in* CHRIST's stead, be ye reconciled to GOD. JESUS CHRIST has committed unto us the word of Reconciliation."<sup>1</sup> The power to

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 20, 18.

absolve penitent and believing sinners was the Resurrection gift of JESUS to His Church. "When He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the HOLY GHOST; whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained."<sup>1</sup>

Now this Resurrection gift, as well as all other gifts and graces, needed for establishing and extending the kingdom of CHRIST among men, has been perpetuated in the Church. The outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace for carrying on this work is still, as in the beginning, the "laying on of hands" in Ordination. Every priest at his Ordination hears these words said over him: "Receive the HOLY GHOST for the office and work of a Priest in the Church of GOD now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands; whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained."<sup>2</sup>

It would, it seems to me, be a pity to "stumble" at this word. There is nothing unusual in the fact of GOD blessing man through man. The treasure is put into earthen vessels indeed, that the excellency of the power may be of GOD and not of us; but no less is it a real and most blessed treasure.<sup>3</sup> It seems as if GOD were determined that every humble and penitent man should know in one way or other that He forgave him. So, if by reading and prayer, and conversation and meditation, His child cannot get to know and feel the truth of His forgiveness, while he holds aloof

<sup>1</sup> S. John xx. 22, 23.

<sup>2</sup> Ordination Service.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 7.

from the sacrament of His grace, this knowledge can yet be obtained at the mouth of His priest. And so the Church in one of the exhortations in the Communion Office requires her parish priests to say to His people these words : " And because it is requisite, that no man should come to the Holy Communion, but with a full trust in GOD's mercy, and with a quiet conscience ; therefore if there be any of you, who by this means cannot quiet his own conscience herein, but requireth further comfort or counsel, let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned minister of GOD's Word, and open his grief ; that by the ministry of GOD's holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness."

I therefore advise the Christian who has any scruple or doubtfulness, that is, who has not peace with God through pardon, to comply with this injunction, and go and unburden his grief and receive the benefit of absolution. For GOD the FATHER will according to His most sure promise, speak through His servant, and like a sovereign transact business by His ambassador, ratifying in Heaven, what is said in humble confidence and honest obedience, in His name on earth.

The load of guilt and of doubting will be lifted from his conscience by the hand of JESUS CHRIST Himself, and peace, the peace of a forgiven man who knows he is forgiven will make her home in his heart. There will be no difficulty then in going with a quiet conscience to the Holy Communion, where he will

more fully experience the peace of CHRIST and enter into the joy of his LORD.

We ought not, I think, to wonder that our Heavenly FATHER takes such pains to let His children know of His love and pardon. How astonishing it would be, on the other hand, if He were to forgive them and *not* let them know it ! Imagine yourself to have grievously offended one whom you have honoured and loved. Perhaps you have done your best to make amends, but whether your friend has overlooked the offence or not, you cannot tell ; at any rate, the sense of guilt makes you shun him. You are in constant terror lest you should chance to meet him, and rather than pass his door you will go round by another street. Your friend, however, has long ago forgiven and forgotten the affair, and whilst you have been living in misery, dreading to meet him, he for his part has been wondering why you never came to see him, never dreaming of the real cause of your absence. But now suppose the real facts of the case to come to the knowledge of your friend, is it conceivable that he, if at all a generous man, will leave you alone in your misery, and never let you know the fact that he has quite forgiven you ? And is GOD to be thought less merciful than man ? Does He forgive and still let the sinner go on in his misery as if unforgiven, with an awful dread of GOD upon him and a horror of death lest it should throw him in His way. On the contrary, when GOD forgives He provides for its being known. By what means ? They are numberless as the sand on the seashore. Sometimes His voice is heard in the silence of the heart,

saying, "I forgive thee all." Sometimes, again, He speaks through nature, amid the solemn mountains in the leafy glade, by the calm blue sea or in the midst of the deafening tempest. His still small voice is heard. "Son, be comforted. I am thy FATHER, and all is forgiven." Or again, He may speak in His House amid the great congregation, through the preacher or without him, a word of mercy heard only by that one waiting soul which thirsts for it. Or, He may send His ambassador to speak the word of Absolution, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." But whichever voice He speaks by, the LORD will speak, and not keep silence,—if only the ear is willing to listen to His voice. If indeed a person insist on choosing the way in which God will speak, saying, for instance, "if I cannot hear Him in my own heart, I will not go to His priest, for I do not believe that He would ever absolve me through a mortal man," this would surely not be quite the right spirit. For is not the right spirit that of a child ready to receive with thankfulness? "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."<sup>1</sup> This spirit is therefore to be asked from GOD, and that proud spirit which would dictate to GOD is to be resisted at whatever cost. Speak, LORD, Thy servant heareth. In whatever manner Thou art pleased to reveal Thy pardoning grace, whatever steps I must take to gain that revelation, I am willing to take and desire to be entirely obedient to Thy commands. Only grant me, and that soon, the knowledge that my sin is pardoned,

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. xviii.



and all is well between me and Thee ; for indeed I cannot live in this Thy world without knowing that I am at peace with Thee.

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## CHAPTER VII.

*THE INNER LIFE OF PEACE.*

“ Come, peace of mind, delightful guest,  
Return and make thy downy nest  
Once more in this sad heart.  
Nor riches I nor power pursue,  
Nor hold forbidden joys in view,  
We therefore need not part.”

COWPER.

WHEN a man can say, I am forgiven, then for the first time he can say, “I love GOD.” And now he begins to understand what true peace really is. That word, “I love GOD,” is the fresh and joyous spring, issuing from the Rock of Ages, which forms the beginning of the River of his peace. How happy, nay, how blessed is he now, at peace with GOD and with all things in GOD. The laws and forces of the material world, unintelligible as they are, and often seemingly opposed to him, he yet loves them all, because they are but the reins in the hand of Him Who guides the chariot, the Hand of his beloved FATHER up in Heaven. The universe is to him full of light, and there is no darkness at all,—save of course the moral darkness of sin, and that he can trust his FATHER in His own good time to sweep away for ever.

This blessedness of the pardoned is wonderfully set forth and illustrated in the Book of Psalms.

Those sacred writers who bewailed so deeply the sadness of sin, knew also how to exult in the joy of pardon and of restored communion with the God they loved. Look for instance at the thirty-second Psalm for an illustration of this. Here David describes the blessedness of the man to whom the LORD imputeth no sin : "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." It is of himself he speaks. He says that so long as he would not own his sins, but would try to excuse and deny them, he experienced nothing but extremest misery of mind and body. "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me, my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." At length, in a happy moment, he resolved to palliate and conceal his sins no longer, but to lay bare before God the plague of his heart. "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD."

No sooner had he done so, than he found relief. Just as when the prodigal said, "Father, I have sinned," that father forgave, so here, "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." And now, comforted and relieved, he can rest in the bosom of his God. "Thou art a place to hide me in," he says, "Thou shalt preserve me from trouble. Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance."

Henceforth his onward and upward path will be a triumphal progress, with angelic spirits singing round

him as he goes. Songs of joy over his redemption from sin and death. Henceforth, too, he knows the guiding hand of GOD, which his sin had prevented him from apprehending before, will be seen pointing the way in which he should walk, while the eye of love, more mighty in its gentle influence than the arm of force, will sweetly constrain him to follow that way. "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go, I will guide thee with Mine eye," rather (as in the margin) "Mine eye shall be upon thee." Finally, from the last verse of this Psalm, we see how completely the storm has been changed into a calm, and the night of sorrow given place to the rejoicing dawn. "Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous, and shout for joy, all ye that are true of heart."

The clouds of sin and woe have rolled away from the horizon, and the glorious sun, which is GOD, has arisen with healing in His wings, shedding a bright and blessed light over all the landscape of his life, and cresting with a hopeful radiance the snowy peaks of the mountains through which he must take his arduous but prosperous way to reach his own true home.

### *The new motive of life.*

Thus the Christian, pardoned and rejoicing, sets forth to tread the path of peace. He has not only left his sins at the Cross of his SAVIOUR, he has also received there a motive of life. The dying eye of JESUS has spoken to his inmost soul and said, "I died for thee, wilt thou not live for Me?" And so

he has given himself to his SAVIOUR, constrained by His love; he has become His servant. He has thus repaired the old error of choosing self for his idol, and has returned to the original and only true condition of man, in which GOD is the object of life. Henceforth for him to live, it will be CHRIST. He will seek to do His commandments that he may abide in His love and retain His peace.

Let us now see what means the great Head of the Church has provided to enable His servants to do this, even whilst living in the midst of an evil world.

Another point, though bearing more on the outer life. It is the new motive of life as regards his fellow-men. S. John sums up the duty of the redeemed man in the words, This is His commandment, that we should believe on the Name of the SON of GOD, and love one another as He gave us commandment. These two things then must be done in order to retain peace, believe on the Name of the SON of GOD, that is, remain in fellowship with the FATHER through the SON; love one another, extend to others the charity of GOD. The Christian is redeemed that he may fulfil the righteousness of the law, and that law is fulfilled by loving one another, for "love is the fulfilling of the law." The old motive of life was selfishness; the new principle is love. The more he learns and practises it, the fuller will flow the River of his peace.

Now the principal means to retain the peace of God through CHRIST is *Prayer*.

*Prayer.*

“Prayer is the breathing of a sigh,  
The falling of a tear,  
The upward glancing of the eye  
When none but GOD is near.”

“Pray without ceasing,” says S. Paul. “We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit maketh intercession in us with unspoken groanings.”

Prayer has been called “the complaint of the HOLY SPIRIT under His Incarnation in our hearts.”<sup>1</sup> Prayer has been called the breathing of the HOLY SPIRIT incarnate within us. It is His longing after Him from Whom He comes. It is the maintaining communion and fellowship with CHRIST. To keep alive the life of faith and love, to abide in CHRIST, to draw constant grace from Him, the Christian must pray without ceasing. He must not only pray regularly and at length as he has opportunity, morning and evening; but frequently in the busy day he must lift up his heart. The LORD’S Prayer, by which any wants can be expressed, will be found a ready vehicle of devotion; and when there is not time for that, the merest ejaculation will bring a blessing. Whenever there is any falling short in the supplies of peace, whenever the soul is ruffled or disturbed, a cry for help in obedience to the command to pray will be rewarded with a return of some measure of calm and patience to the soul.

<sup>1</sup> E. Irving, i. 364.

We are expressly told to ask and it shall be given us. Confiding our thoughts and feelings, our wants and necessities to God, will, we are promised, always comfort us. That mind will be kept in peace which is stayed on Him. The Apostle very closely connects together prayer with peace in the words, "Be careful for nothing : but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto GOD, and the peace of GOD which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through CHRIST JESUS."<sup>1</sup> Whether prayer be regarded as a means of making known our case to GOD, or of keeping up the remembrance of the presence of GOD, it will ever be found a source of consolation and of peace.

The duty and purity of intercessory prayer will be spoken of further on. The general duty of praying *with* others as well as for them will commend itself to the conscience and heart of parent, spouse, and friend. Family worship is an established institution of the Christian household. Attendance at daily prayer in Church is found by those whose engagements admit of their taking part a blessed means of grace. It is also an excellent custom to engage in a brief five minutes' meditation before or after the service.

### *Imitation of Christ.*

"I have given you an example."—S. John xiii. 15.

The Christian must not only pray ; he must strive to live after the pattern of CHRIST, he must study

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iv. 6, 7.

the human and earthly life of the SON of GOD to ascertain the kind of life which is the best for man. In the Gospel he will see the portrait of the Perfect Man. Under the direction of the Blessed Spirit, and by the insight He imparts, he will ponder one by one the features of the Divine Countenance, and study its beauty, and be moved to imitate it. JESUS is the Perfect Man, therefore the Christian must "look unto JESUS."<sup>1</sup> With more fidelity and constancy than the artist looks at the noble portrait which he is trying to transfer to his canvas, must the GOD-taught artist look again and again at JESUS. He will find that the more he searches and reflects the more he will find what was worth his search, that each trait of His character and action of His life is full of the deepest meaning, and would, if transferred by him into his every-day life, materially increase the happiness and the holiness of the world. For "His ways were ways of pleasantness, and all His paths were peace," and whether it was by the Lake of Galilee or in the streets of Jerusalem, on the mount of Glory or the mount of Death, the deeds and words of the GOD-Man were all full of His own deep peace, each a well of life whereof the soul can drink.

To illustrate this point—the perfection of the character of JESUS—would require a volume. But it is fully treated in many works. I mention only Ullmann's "Sinlessness of JESUS" and Farrar's "Life of CHRIST," and, fortunately within reach of all, the immortal "Imitation of CHRIST," by Thomas à Kempis.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 2.

*The Holy Scriptures. Meditation.*

“And Isaac’s servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water.”—Gen. xxvi. 19.

The Life of JESUS, as recorded in the Gospel and the whole of the sacred writings, must be meditated on if they are to be a means of grace and peace. “Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart.”<sup>1</sup> It is a mistake to fancy that much profit can come from merely reading through a chapter. Better far confine oneself to an incident, a few verses, or even a single precept, from among the Words of JESUS or any of the Prophets or Apostles of GOD who have written in the Bible the Revelation of His Holy Will. Better five minutes’ meditation on a text than a half-hour spent in running through chapters. Often indeed one ought to read a large portion of Scripture at a sitting in order to gain an idea of the gist and meaning of it. Such a letter as S. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, for instance, can never be understood unless one will once read it through. But for the Christian’s edification from day to day, his best course is to take a few verses, and if like Isaac’s servants he digs in the valley, he will find there a well of springing water.

The following method of meditation is the easiest I can think of. Alone with GOD and his own soul the Christian will naturally begin his meditation by asking for the help of the HOLY SPIRIT; then, opening his

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xv. 16.



Bible, he reads a few of the sacred words, and then proceeds to reflect on their import. Perhaps he is at a loss for thoughts: let him then use this means. *First*, let him realise the scene, or the force and meaning of the words; *next*, ask what does the passage teach; *thirdly*, resolve what he shall do in consequence. Or to put this in other words—First, I endeavour to see it; secondly, I ask, what does it teach? thirdly, what shall I do? To give an instance. Let us suppose it is the scene of CHRIST feeding the multitude which is to be his subject. *First*, then, he will imagine himself present there; he sees JESUS, the disciples, the multitude sitting on the grass, &c.; JESUS giving the bread to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude, the people eating, &c. *Secondly*, What does it teach? It teaches me that CHRIST can feed us, body, and soul, and spirit, (perhaps he confines his thoughts to one of these;) it teaches me, he says, that CHRIST can feed my spirit and make it strong. *Thirdly*, What shall I do? I shall feed upon CHRIST now, and look up to Him, and draw strength and wisdom from Him this day while busy with my work.

### *Self-examination and Repentance.*

To continue in the way of peace the Christian must continue in the way of repentance. It is vain to deceive ourselves, we dare not pretend to be free from sin, and hence we dare not pretend to have done with repentance. The child of God is not yet wholly sanctified in body, soul, and spirit. He is constantly tempted and often yields to temptation, at least in thought; too often, alas, in word; and sometimes

even, it must be owned, in actual deed. Oftener in deeds left undone—"Who *can* understand how oft he offendeth!" It is true this yielding to sin is most sad and most dangerous, but can it be denied as a fact? Is there not sin, at least a germ of transgression wherever there is so much as an evil or rebellious thought, if entertained only for an instant?

Alas, indeed, we sin continually, and he may be a sincere, but surely he is a very ill-instructed and self-blinded Christian, who thinks that CHRIST has lifted him up above the possibility of sinning. The Church our Mother at any rate knows of no such condition for *her* children here, and if there is impeccability on earth, it must be sought for in the sects. The Church every time her children assemble and meet together calls on them to repent, and reminds them that "if they say they have no sin, they deceive themselves, and the truth is not in them."

Indeed we need daily to repent of daily shortcomings, and our very repentances need to be repented of. As the holy Rutherford said, "Our very tears want washing, and the washing of our tears requires to be washed over again in the blood of our Redeemer."

Therefore the Christian, if he would retain the peace of GOD, must see that the clouds which gather between him and the sun are dispelled at once. He knows he has only to look up to GOD and say, "FATHER, I have sinned again; FATHER, forgive me for the sake of JESUS."

But that his confessions of sin may not be formal and useless, the child of GOD must ponder his ways

to see what sin there is in him. The duty of self-examination and heart-searching is one often neglected by those who imagine themselves devout and loving followers of CHRIST. Hence faults patent to every one else are concealed from their subjects, and their virtues lose half their efficacy. The saying, "No man is a hero to his valet-de-chambre," is painfully true of many a Christian, and the man who is electrifying the universe with news of salvation is found ill-tempered or unbearingly self-assertive by his near relations, who much prefer his absence on revival tours to his presence at the domestic board. Whence this dreary self-deception? Whence but from want of daily, prayerful, lowly examining of conscience before the tribunal of GOD. In truth, the person who examines himself systematically is not permitted to remain in ignorance of his faults. Hence humility is his marked and unmistakeable characteristic. On the other hand, you may set it down for certain—the man who has no humility, however loud his professions or manifold his seeming victories, is as yet a stranger to the Divine art of self-examination.

The Christian who seeks to keep the path of peace ought to search out every night his conduct during the day—"to examine his life and conversation by the rule of GOD's commandments ; and whereinsoever he shall perceive himself to have offended, either by will, word, or deed, there to bewail his own sinfulness, and to confess himself to Almighty GOD, with full purpose of amendment of life."<sup>1</sup> This the Prayer Book enjoins especially as a preparation for the Holy Communion.

<sup>1</sup> Communion Office.

For this indeed there ought always to be a special preparatory self-examining, and this will be greatly aided by the daily one.

Having thus examined himself, and confessed his sins of the past day, purposing to amend, the Christian ought not to doubt of GOD's free and full forgiveness. It is indeed his, and to doubt it would be the sin of unbelief. And being thus forgiven he can consign himself to sleep, though it is the image of death, assured that even if he should never awake here below, GOD would show to him the path of peace elsewhere.

### *Chastisement.*

Often the FATHER sees fit to chasten and to punish. He who spared not His only-begotten SON cannot always pass by the transgressions of His sinful children; for "holiness becometh His house for ever," and if men thought that because CHRIST died for them they could do what they pleased, the holy kingdom which CHRIST is seeking to establish—the "heaven and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness"—would never come into existence.

Both on account of GOD's own holy character, and as a lesson to others and to the Christian himself, the offender must be punished. Not that he is ever punished as much as he deserves, for CHRIST has borne the load of his transgressions for him. He has paid the capital of his debt, leaving him only, as it were, a certain sum to pay up, trivial in amount indeed compared to "all that debt." O for grace ever when thus corrected to own our ill-deserts, and flee anew to the

Cross for pardon. Then GOD Who is yearning over His deceived and wandering child, will not be slow to clasp him to His embrace and clothe him anew in the robe of righteousness.

Sin often brings down fearful punishments even upon the good. For there is something worse than punishment, and of this there will be great danger if the man falls into wilful sin. That worse thing is a heart grown callous and hard ; a heart which has lost its spiritual perceptions and sensibilities, and which has ceased to *care*. "It had been better for him not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after he had known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto him."<sup>1</sup>

### *Watching.*

Hence the need of continual watchfulness. Indeed, given these two, prayer and watching, there will be no serious departure from the ways of peace. Prayer looks up to GOD, and watching looks down to one's own steps. The former, however, will not avail without the latter. For of what use to pray, "Lead us not into temptation," if a man heedlessly walk into it. Rather, "avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." "Let thine eye look right on, and thine eyelids straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left, remove thy foot from evil."<sup>2</sup> To do so, keep thy *heart* with all diligence. Make a covenant with thine *eyes*. Have a

<sup>1</sup> 2 S. Pet. ii. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. iv. 25—27.

watch set before thy *lips*.<sup>1</sup> Keep thy *body* under subjection.<sup>2</sup> And oh, above all avoid that which renders virtue an impossibility, *excess in eating or drinking*. With reference to the latter, what saith the wise man?

“Look not thou upon the wine when it is red; at the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder; thine eye shall behold strange women, and thy mouth shall utter perverse things.” It is scarcely too much to say, that a Christian who had once known the power of true religion would almost never fall into the commission of a deadly and damning sin, if he did not first lose command of himself; and what so fatally deprives him of this as alcoholic stimulants? Many a man of sincere Christian feeling and earnest desire has been started on a downward career by simply taking once *one glass too much*. That one excess has lost him his power over his own body. Or rather, through it he has been taken from the dominion of the HOLY SPIRIT and given over to the power of the devil, who by inflaming evil desires and silencing the reproofs of conscience, has driven him on into sin, from which his sober self would have shrunk in horror; and which, when he sees them from the other side of the chasm down which he has been madly rushing, shall wring from him the bitter anguish of remorse. Ah, then it will be difficult for him to repent. Not because GOD will not be still willing to be gracious, but because his heart will have hardened to the call of GOD. “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.”

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxli. 3.

<sup>2</sup> I Cor. ix. 27.

*Fasting and Almsgiving.*

Very closely connected with the self-control so indispensable to virtue is the practice of fasting. Our LORD (S. Matt. vi.) has given special directions on it, placing it in the same category of duties as prayer and almsgiving. JESUS fasted Himself. He said there were kinds of evil which could be subdued only by prayer and fasting. The Church has accordingly ordained days of fasting and occasions of fasting. She uses the word in different senses,—now to denote abstinence from food, now again restriction in kind and degree of food and other things.<sup>1</sup> At other times, as in the Vigils of Festivals and during Lent, we are to moderate our use of things otherwise permitted, that we may prove the reality of our faith in things unseen, increase our power over our own body, and imitate our Divine Master. There are no strict and binding rules laid down in our Communion; Christians are supposed to have sense to know in what way they are to deny themselves, and if they are disposed to shirk so difficult a duty, they ought to have recourse to their director or some “discreet and learned” minister.

Almsgiving, of which our LORD speaks also in that sixth chapter of S. Matthew, is a great means of grace and help to the life of peace. For it is the opposite of covetousness and love of money. This great vice of our day is an essential enemy to peace, hence whatever goes against it, is our friend. We militate

<sup>1</sup> The fasting practised by most Christians before receiving the Sacrament (though not *commanded* by the Church) is an abstaining from all food.

against that love of things and possessions which is so debasing to the soul, by giving away of our substance to those who need it.

### *Holy Communion.*

We have now been glancing at some of the means whereby the new life of peace is to be maintained. The work is great, but it is not ours, but His in us. By realising the presence of CHRIST through prayer, and by seeking to imitate Him through study of the sacred record of His life and the rest of the Bible ; together with self-examination and repentance, patience and watchfulness against the lusts of the flesh, fasting and almsgiving,—by doing little by little the will of GOD, and walking step by step by faith in CHRIST, the Christian will pursue the path of peace.

But there is an outward means of grace provided for him,—to be his support, and nourishment, and strength, even Bread from Heaven, the celestial Manna, angels' food.

This is his SAVIOUR Himself, Who will offer Himself to him in Holy Communion.

The Sacrament of the LORD'S Supper was instituted by CHRIST the night in which He was betrayed to be a Remembrance of Him and a means by which His people should receive Him. It was the only form of worship He appointed, hence it was from the first the chief one used.<sup>1</sup> It was natural that the disciples

<sup>1</sup> The phrase "Breaking of Bread" in the New Testament, *κλάσις τοῦ ἄρτου*, stands for administering the Sacrament of the LORD'S Supper. (S. Luke xxiv. 30, 35 ; Acts ii. 46, &c.) S. Paul's words (1 Cor. x. 16) are of themselves sufficient to show



meeting on the Resurrection Day, the Sunday, for their chief religious exercises, in honour of Him Who had risen, should use that service which He had with His own lips commanded and used in their presence, saying, "*This do for a remembrance of Me.*" That they should have accompanied this great act with hymns in honour of CHRIST, and prayers and praises and readings of the Holy Scriptures, and that gradually a Liturgy and Ritual should have grown up, varying in different countries, but radically the same in all, this is what any one would have anticipated, and what did actually occur.

Besides the weekly Celebration the early Church offered this service sometimes on the Wednesdays and Fridays, and in some places every day, and it is well known what a source of strength these frequent Communions were to those early heroes of the Faith, and how they were hereby enabled to live very spiritual lives,—not breaking the unity of the Church as modern Christians use when stirred with zeal like theirs,—but forming only One Body united in faith and love, which are in CHRIST JESUS.

Nor has this custom of daily celebrations disappeared from the whole Church, although we in England see it but rarely. This I know, that daily in the

this : "The Bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of CHRIST?" Accordingly when it is stated that the object of the Christian gathering on the LORD'S Day was to break bread, we are justified in inferring that the Communion was the great service of the Sunday. No one conversant with the history of the Church doubts that it was so in the beginning as ever after.

valley in which I write these lines (Urserenthal) very early each morning,—at four in summer, and five in winter,—the poor Swiss peasants go to Church to take part in this service. It is true they are Roman Catholics, that is, they belong to a Church which has corrupted and added to God's truth ; there may therefore be some erroneous views mixed up with their worship. If so, may GOD forgive them ! and may He also forgive yon proud Protestant who sneers at them, and who, were *he* to hear the church bell ring at an hour when peasants and mechanics might come to worship before going to their work, would do his best to laugh down the innovation, and pour contempt alike on parson and worshippers. But as for these dear pious Swiss, GOD bless them ! say I. They tell me that it is the greatest comfort and help to them to be present where their dear LORD is, and to pray to Him and sing His praises and ask the FATHER to accept the memorial which they offer in remembrance of JESUS, as He has commanded, and to give them His peace and blessing for the day : I am quite ready to believe it. For He hath revealed unto babes some things which He hath hid from the wise and prudent. And surely the blessedness of such revelation direct from Him must be more than all the knowledge which flows from a source anything less Divine.

Great as are the differences of opinion respecting the nature of this Sacrament, there are yet points on which all Christians are agreed. For instance all, High and Low, Romans and Anglicans, Lutherans and Presbyterians, believe that in this Sacrament there is in some way a remembrance made of JESUS CHRIST.

Some say it is a sacrificial and availing remembrance ; some a representation on earth of the one Sacrifice once offered on the Cross and now presented in Heaven, and some only a commemorative remembrance. In a word, some say it is a remembrance before God, and others only a remembrance before those present. Still all agree that there is in this Sacrament a Remembrance of CHRIST. Now if He is remembered, if this Remembrance is not unacceptable to Him, He will be there in His graciousness to receive it. He will not turn away from our offering—if it is made in faith and sincerity, because the worshippers may differ as to the exact nature of the offering or the manner of His presence. If then we take only this *one* point in which *all* are agreed, surely every one who loves the SAVIOUR will say of this Sacrament, “LORD, it must be good to be here,” to offer this remembrance and to hold communion with Thee !

Now this privilege is offered to Christians weekly in many parishes, and the number is increasing every day. Soon we may hope there will be few decently-served churches, where is not a celebration every LORD’S DAY. If then the believer would keep God’s peace, let him never miss the opportunity to attend. I would have him not only be present, but seek to be capable of *receiving* every LORD’S DAY. For although it is good for him to be here, even without communicating, still the perfect worship demands that too. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread and drink of that Cup.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 28.

The weekly Communion will keep the Christian in the way of peace better than aught else, for it will keep him frequently rendering the greatest act of homage to the Prince of Peace, and receiving in return His stores of wisdom and of grace. His soul can never wander far from its rest in the LORD, if he thus gently draws it back every Sunday into CHRIST'S immediate presence. The six days' work may have tended to mar his holiness by earthly care and disturb his peace by outward warfare, but the Communion of the Body and the Blood of JESUS will restore him to himself and his SAVIOUR, and give him strength to go on his way rejoicing into the ensuing week.

Happy the child of GOD who has the opportunity, and uses it with faithfulness, of weekly taking part in this feast of love. He will find it more to him than all the other services of the Sunday, for in these other services for the most part he hears GOD'S word from the preacher, or he speaks to GOD in prayer. But here, GOD Himself meets with him in the Person of JESUS, holds communion with him from above the mercy-seat, even descends and holds out to him the golden sceptre of His grace, saying, "What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee," advances to embrace him with the arms of His love, gives him food and refreshment, enters into his heart, takes up His abode there to live and reign henceforth within him. Impossible, that coming prepared he should be sent empty away.

And after the service let him not be in haste to leave the sacred courts; rather remaining to give

thanks, and to allow the message of insight or direction he has received to sink deep. Then, back into life, to show by a serious cheerfulness that peace smiles in his heart, for indeed has not the Prince of Peace Himself descended there ?

*Assistance from others. Spiritual direction.*

In treading the path of obedience and of peace, great assistance will be obtained from others. God has so joined us together that we give and receive light as well as strength from contact with other minds. To be capable of receiving such aids, the Christian must lay aside his pride and be meek and lowly in heart. "Them that are gentle will He learn His way." He will often learn it through the help of friends : "A word spoken in due season, how good is it."<sup>1</sup> We are often very much deceived as to ourselves, for the heart is deceitful. "The mind itself," says S. Gregory, "often lies concerning itself, and fancies that it loves of a good work what it loves not, and of the glory of the world does not love what it really loves." Even good persons are blind to their own defects : hence they do not improve. The axe is never laid to the root of the tree, because people are not aware of the existence of the root of bitterness, which is the cause of all the mischief. Hence the need of some kind of help or guidance in spiritual things.

Beuvelet, a man of great experience in the guidance of souls, has some valuable remarks on this subject : "Consider how necessary it is to have a guide, in

<sup>1</sup> Prov. xv. 23.

order to advance in the spiritual life. 1st. Because usually we are, as regards ourselves, blind and in danger of deceiving ourselves, if we are not guided by some one. 2nd. Because God has been pleased to order it so, that men are guided by their fellows. 3rd. Because, though we may know our road by other means, we are always more certain that we know it by this one. And surely, if for our bodily health we consult our doctor, and for affairs of law our solicitor, how much more ought we to consult persons of experience in the affairs of our salvation.”<sup>1</sup>

He next goes on to speak of the manner of dealing with our spiritual guide. We are to regard him, he says, as given by God to assist us. 2nd. We are to speak to him frankly and honestly, showing him plainly the good and the bad, learning from him how to improve in our prayers and communions, &c. Finally, he quotes from Ecclesiasticus, showing the blessing of having such a friend, “A faithful friend is a strong defence, and he that hath found such a one hath found a treasure. Nothing is comparable to a faithful friend. A faithful friend is the medicine of life, and they that fear the LORD shall find him.”<sup>2</sup>

Some of my readers may be thinking they have no need of any guide. The invisible guide is enough for them. They need no pastor or visible shepherd to lead and feed them. They know well enough what they are, how they stand, what they ought to do, &c. Reader, I ask, Have you perfect peace through well-assured pardon? and are you advancing, really getting

<sup>1</sup> Meditations, Vol. I. No. CXXX.

<sup>2</sup> Eccclus. vi. 14.

on in the path of obedience, growing in self-denial, charity, and, mark this, *humility*? If you can humbly and honestly say, *yes*, why then perhaps you do require such help. Although after all, the heart is very treacherous : mind you are not being taken in.

But the majority of mankind do evidently require some sort of guide. I should not, I know, alone and without a man to show me the way, think of venturing to ascend that noble Galenstock, whose lordly heights tower within my view as I write these lines. It is true, he seems accessible enough. His glorious summit with that deep bank of snow of heavenly whiteness crowning it, glistens in the sun and seems to invite my ascent, as if there were no difficulty. But what is the truth? The truth is, that the difficulties and dangers are so great that if I were to climb such a mountain alone I should never in all human probability reach the top, and if I did I should reach the bottom faster than I should care to.

In like manner, assuredly, the glorious heights of Zion appear to the view of the ardent Christian as easy of ascent as they are fair and attractive. But many and many a one has failed to reach them, all through want of a proper guide.

“ But have we not the unseen Guide, JESUS CHRIST, to show us the way yonder?” Yes, and surely we have Him in the Alps as well, but still we take a visible guide up the difficult mountains. But have we not the Bible to guide us? Assuredly, and so has the mountaineer his compass and his map : still he takes a guide.

Depend upon it, it is much more difficult work

than you think, young Christian ! And don't go and dream that all your inspirations are right, and because you fancy a thing to have been suggested to you by the Blessed Spirit, it is so. All the myriads of heretics that have blundered away from orthodoxy ; all the thousands of sects that soil the fair face of Christendom have taken their rise in this very delusion. Each ringleader thought he had the Spirit more than other people, and could do without a guide, contemptuous alike of the experience of the dead and of the wisdom of the living.

But supposing a guide is necessary, what guide am I to take ? Now any guide won't do. He must be an accredited guide. Not any villager or blacksmith would presume to offer to take me up yon Galenstock, but only the well-known guide of the village. Now your clergyman is, properly speaking, your guide ; he has the cure, that is, the care of your soul. Perhaps you may think him unfit, still remember he has received a gift to enable him to discharge the duties of his office—a gift not depending on his personal merits. When he was solemnly ordained, he received the HOLY GHOST for the office of a Priest in the Church of GOD. And I cannot doubt that if you were to go to him, asking GOD to bless your interview, you would receive a blessing. But you can't make up your mind to that. Well, if so, my advice would be, *wait upon God* for light as to whom you should go to. He sent Jethro to His servant Moses to give him relief. He sent Ananias to Saul, blind, remorseful, fasting, to say to him, " Brother Saul, the LORD, even JESUS, hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight and be



filled with the HOLY GHOST ; now therefore, arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins.”<sup>1</sup> He sent all His Apostles forth, bidding them say at every house they entered, “Peace be to this house.”<sup>2</sup> He will also send His messenger to you. “He will speak peace to His people and to His saints, that they turn not again.” The messenger is indeed ready waiting, nothing is wanting but that you should be sensible that you need him, and should seek him from God.

The earnest soul that longs after God will not be left unheeded. God will come to the relief of His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them. And sometimes in the most remarkable ways.

A lady who had been much blessed by the ministry of Edward Irving in London, gave him an account of the strange way in which she had been led to him.

“In the midst of her sorrowful nights,” writes Irving, “she had dreamed a dream ; that she was carried to a church, of which the form and court, even to two trees which grew over the wall, were impressed upon her mind ; and there she heard a minister, whose form and dress to the very shape of his gown was also impressed upon her, who preached to her from these words, ‘Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven.’ This she communicated to one of her friends, to whom describing the gown, she answered that he must be a Scotch minister who was intended by the vision, for they are the only people who wear that kind of gown. She had already heard two ministers, but was sure they answered not to the figure

<sup>1</sup> Acts ix. 22.

<sup>2</sup> S. Luke x. 5.

of the vision ; but as she passed a window, she saw a print of me, and was impressed with the resemblance. Heretofore she had been deterred from coming near me by the crowd, but now she resolved some evening to come ; and, having taken a friend's house by the way, they strongly gainsaid her purpose, and would have taken her elsewhere with them, and all but prevailed. This detained her beyond the hour, and when she returned, our psalm and prayer were over, and I was naming the subject of lecture, and the first words that fell upon her ears were the words of her dream : 'Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven.' She stood in the midst of a crowd, hardly able to stand, and beheld and heard all which had been revealed to her in the visions of the night. Is not this very marvellous, and very gracious, that the LORD should comfort His people by such a worm as I am ?"<sup>1</sup>

It is indeed a marvel of Divine grace that God should comfort His people by such worms as we are. Still greater the marvel that He should send His priceless gift of absolution by them.<sup>2</sup>

But the tendency of human nature unhappily is to misuse GOD's gifts, and when He sends human assistance, we are apt to use it *instead* of Him. Thus some who use confession in the Catholic Church, and some who need periodic enkindling by favourite revivalists in other communions, have fallen into the snare of leaning on an arm of flesh,—a snare which has also attached to it a solemn malediction, "Cursed

<sup>1</sup> Irving's Life, by Mrs. Oliphant, i. 339.

<sup>2</sup> See above.

be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD."<sup>1</sup> The use of the helps GOD vouchsafes is to draw and keep us near to Him : their abuse ensues when they lead us from the LORD.

Nor must we forget that the end of all man's discipline here is to teach him to walk by faith. Hence the least sensible assistance requisite for so walking is the best. Thousands err through vainly despising assistance, and pass through life in a dream of spiritual pride : others err through making too much of it. He who permits his steps to be guided by the Divine Spirit will take the middle path wherein alone is safety.

### *Intercession.*

Among the aids to the life of Peace derived from others must be ranked the assistance of their supplications for us. This is a precious means of grace. For GOD Who could indeed have given without requiring to be asked, has been pleased to desire to be entreated for His favours both by His servant and by others on his behalf. The reason we may well believe to be this, that He seeks not only to join His servant to Himself, but to unite him more closely to his friends. For indeed nothing stimulates Christian love like intercessory prayer, and never does one drink so deep a draught of the sweet Communion of Saints as when one pours out his heart for another into the heart of GOD.

The best living are still sinful, and prayers for others must include petition for mercy, hence these praye

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xvii. 5.

are called *intercessions*, for to intercede is to pray for the undeserving and the guilty. Now there is, properly speaking, but one Intercessor, one Mediator between GOD and man, the Man CHRIST JESUS, Who, sinless Himself, *can* plead for sinners. But GOD is pleased to admit and to command the intercessions of others pleading in His all-prevailing name.

When of old Israel fought with Amalek, the great intercessor prayed for them on the hill-side, but the hands of Moses were stayed up by Aaron on the one side and Hur on the other : and had he not been so supported, the battle would have gone against his people.<sup>1</sup>

And well is it for the Christian who in the fight of faith is supported by the prayers of friends, holding up as it were the hands of Him Who ever liveth to make intercession for him. How encouraging to reflect that he has indeed already the assistance of many such friendly pleadings. There are, first, his relations and friends on earth, the nearest and dearest ; and there are those who at different times have promised to remember him in their prayers. Others, too, besides, whom he perhaps has forgotten, or possibly never has known, but who have in some way learnt to interest themselves in his salvation. And then to think of all those loved departed, dead to the world, but alive to GOD in the repose of Paradise ! These, too, remember him, once known and loved on earth ; yea, as long as mind and memory last, they never shall forget him, and, remembering, how shall they cease to pray ?

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xvii. 12.

And on his side, too, there are all those noble-hearted souls, who pray for all the family of GOD, the Blessed Virgin, a S. John, a S. Paul, the glorious companies, the goodly fellowships, the noble armies,—those who have themselves accomplished their warfare and are waiting till their brethren complete their course. These all are the Aaron and the Hur, staying up the hands of Him, Who on the Mount of GOD pleads, and pleads not in vain, that in this long life-struggle Israel may win the day.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE OUTER LIFE OF PEACE.

“I labour for peace, but when I speak unto them thereof, they make them ready to battle.”—Ps. cxx. 6.

“Blessed are the peace-makers ; for they shall be called the children of GOD.”—S. Matt. v. 9.

HAVING considered the means whereby the inner life of peace may be maintained, let us now turn our thoughts to its manifestations in the world.

The candle and fair lamp of grace have not been lighted to be put under a bushel, but on a candlestick to give light unto all that are in the house. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your FATHER Which is in heaven.”<sup>1</sup> For they that are in the house,—the world, the Church,—are in sore need of a living illus-

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. vi. 15, 16.

tration of the peace of CHRIST, that they may learn to imitate it.

There is a want of peace in the world, because men have chosen self for their idol instead of the LORD for their GOD. And as each self is different from all others, and interests clash, disturbance and tumult are the necessary result of all this self-idolatry. It is as though all the planets were to break away from the sun, and each revolve on its own account through a limited portion of space, in constant danger of collision.

S. Paul says to the Philippians, "Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves,"<sup>1</sup> and S. James declares that "wars and fightings come from men's lusts, which war in their members."<sup>2</sup>

These verses plainly show that selfishness in one form or another is the cause of warfare amongst men. Each strives to grasp something for *himself*, and so threatens to despoil *another* self, which other self rises up in arms to defend itself. Or again, each tries to magnify self at the expense of every other self, and to make out that itself is the cleverest, strongest, nicest, bravest, wisest, prettiest, or most righteous self that ever existed. Hence arises a vast warfare. They shoot out their arrows, even bitter words, or envious, covetous, or scornful looks. The world is a great battle-field, although fortunately for us not one half of this perpetual strife is of a nature to meet the observation.

<sup>1</sup> Phil. ii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> S. James iv. 1.

Such then is the condition of the world in which the Christian has to live. Selfishness is the principle of fallen man, and the worst of it is that no one will acknowledge it. Every one wastes much of his time in concealing his selfishness from others and himself, and in trying to pass for a different kind of person from what he is. This increases the difficulty ten-fold, for the Christian knows not friend from foe. For himself, he is bound to go amongst them on the principle of a love which seeketh not her own. He has learnt at the Cross to love his brethren. The old natural law of selfishness is laid aside in him for the law of love ; and, though he finds it hard work often to practise the new commandment, still it is his aim and life-object to do so.

His love is a ministering love. The world thinks it a good thing to be served and a disgraceful thing to be a servant. There is a nation so distinguished that no true member of it would be a "help" to any man. "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them ; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors."<sup>1</sup> But what is the edict of the King of kings ? "Ye shall not be so ; but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he that is chief as he that doth serve. I am among you as he that serveth." Ever since these words were spoken, and the deed of the feet-washing was done, the theory (if not the practice) of the Christian Church has been, that ministering love is the noblest and most CHRIST-like thing, and that it is the duty of the disciples of CHRIST not to seek the service

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke xxii. 25.

of others, but to *serve* others for CHRIST's sake. That this is to be done in suitable ways, with the wisdom which the HOLY GHOST giveth, is true ; but done it must be by all who would be true to CHRIST, and enjoy and retain His peace.

The Christian goes forth then into a selfish world, armed with another principle, that of love, and of serving men. Now it is evident he cannot be of much use then, unless he can manage to be at peace with them. It is thus a necessary thing that he bear in mind the Apostle's admonition, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."<sup>1</sup> Doubtless the way to keep from strife is to avoid those things which cause it. Now the desire for the things of this world, its riches and its honours, is a frequent cause of rivalry, jealousy, and heart-burnings. By subduing such desires one will lose all disposition to contend with others for the possession of these vain and fleeting things.

Pride and vain-glory are a cause of ill-feeling among men. But the follower of CHRIST must endeavour to esteem others better than himself, (as no doubt every one is in one respect or other.) He will condescend, yet without showing it, and take the place of an equal with the lowly. It has been well remarked that "the man who shows that he's above you by ever so little a bit, is an ass, and the most disagreeable of asses." Here it may suffice to say that he who does so is but a poor follower of his Master.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xii. 18.



*Quarrels.*

"It takes two to make a quarrel" is a useful maxim, and may well be remembered when, as must needs be, offences come. Still it will not cut the knot of every difficulty. Offence is twofold, either given or received. When given, the son of peace must at once seek to repair the evil he has done. "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Even the most solemn of all religious services is to be interrupted, that the offender may go and make peace with his brother. Only when he has to the best of his ability sought reconciliation there, can he presume to worship before God.

But suppose the opposite case,—*"Thy brother has trespassed against thee,"*—what is then to be done? Rebuke him, says the Master, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he express regret, thou hast gained thy brother. If he sin against thee never so often, and still turn to thee saying, *"I repent,"* thou must forgive him. But if he will not own his fault? In that case one is still to use efforts, and not until the case seems hopeless are we to look upon the hardened offender as an heathen man and a publican.<sup>1</sup>

Such are in brief the injunctions of CHRIST, and here too the path of obedience is the path of peace. But how many are disobedient in this! They pro-

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. v. 23, 24 ; xviii. 15 ; S. Luke xvii. 3, 4.

ceed at once to cut the offender, without having the manliness or the charity first to rebuke him and *tell* him his fault. Often the sinner is not so much as aware of having given offence, and never intended to do so. The slightest word of expostulation would have led him to see that his words were not wise, or just, or kind. That one word the offended brother was too craven or too proud to speak. Hence a coolness and a quarrel which the years have only widened, and the shadow of which can perhaps now never be dispelled.

*The Peace-maker.*

“’Tis only by the lowly  
The path of peace is trod.”

The SAVIOUR has appropriated a Beatitude to those who make peace, declaring that they shall be called the children of God.<sup>1</sup> This special distinction is given them because peace-making is so eminently a Christian virtue, and so difficult that special encouragement is deemed necessary to induce ordinary disciples to practise it. Obedient to His supreme behest, as well as stimulated by the prospect of being declared God’s son in an emphatic and most glorious sense, the Christian will use what opportunities are given him to restore peace. Like Moses of old he will go amongst enemies and say, “Sirs, ye are brethren, why do ye wrong one to another?”<sup>2</sup> Of course the likelihood is, that both the combatants will turn upon him, and as in that case ask, “Who made thee a ruler and

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. v. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Acts vii. 26, 27.

a judge?" or in plainer Saxon, "What business is it of yours?"

Yet surely we can hardly wonder if he considers it his business, seeing that his LORD and Master, to Whose Hand he looks for the crown of life at the Judgment, has bade him do so, and said he should be blessed if he did. Then is not every Christian to be as his Master, and was not CHRIST the Prince of Peace? Hence where His follower comes, discord should cease and angry passions subside into silence. But just as CHRIST gained peace through war, and first bruising the serpent's head, so the disciple, in the very interests of peace itself, must sometimes first give battle and set down the bully or the oppressor. When and how he ought to defend himself or others, when to obey the precept, "Resist not evil, turn the other cheek also," and when that other, "Quit you like men, be strong,"<sup>1</sup> all this will be revealed to him, as occasion requires, by that Spirit Who is given him to lead him into all truth. Often the impulse which moves a man to punish the wicked doer on the spot is as Divine as that which at other times prompts to milder measures.

### *Witness for the Truth.*

There are times when peace, external and immediate, must be sacrificed for the higher and future peace of eternal truth. Hence, Truth first, and peace afterwards : Truth as the way to peace. For instance, when falsehood is uttered in his hearing, the disciple of Him Who died a martyr to the Truth must bear

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. v. 39 ; 1 Cor. xvi. 13.

witness for the Truth ; although he must imitate His GOD-like silence when detractors assail his own character in order to irritate him into self-defence. Speaking generally, the Truth GOD has taught him, he should make known to others,—always, however, in the way most likely to win his hearers. “We *persuade* men,” says S. Paul.<sup>1</sup> If at first he fail in gaining their consent, nay, provoke their opposition, he must not be discouraged or think he is not really on the side of Peace. He must fight on, while opportunity is given him, and just as CHRIST’s witness made the Cross victorious over all the ages, so in due measure will his witness-bearing be rewarded by success, certain though perchance not soon. And Peace, the Peace of Truth, will unfurl her white ensign on the ramparts where the black flag of Error, Prejudice, and Ignorance, waved before.

*Persuading those who know not Peace.*

These remarks have a distinct bearing on the times we live in. Never was there an age when each possessor of CHRIST’s peace was more urgently called upon to diffuse it by bearing witness for the Truth. He goes among men as a humble representative of the Prince of Peace charged with the same mission of establishing His kingdom. He finds everywhere men who believe nothing, and many more who do not live as they profess to believe. He finds them, in consequence of this life, without GOD, entire strangers to peace. They do not know GOD, and have no true

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 11.

happiness. They know nothing of pardon, because they have never repented; nor of holiness, because they have never seriously thought about CHRIST. Their lives are displeasing to GOD. Their days are passed away in His wrath, and were they to be called away from this world they could expect nothing but the sentence of eternal death. They themselves will readily admit the awful fact, if, as they say, the Bible is true, (as though that IF were to throw a doubt upon the certainty of their fate.)

Now, we ask, can one who honestly loves GOD and his fellow-creatures for the sake of GOD, stand by in silence, and see men dishonouring the GOD he loves and losing themselves, whom he also loves, perishing for lack of knowledge, when a word from him might set them thinking, and thinking might end in their salvation? He loves GOD: can he bear to see men living in hatred of that great Being, and swearing and cursing one another by His holy Name, and never move a finger or say a word to vindicate the insulted majesty of Heaven! Again, he loves his fellow-creatures; and will he give himself no trouble to set them free from the misery of unrepented sin and godless lives, or arrest them in their progress to that hell into which they are descending with as great certainty as a river descends to the sea?

Surely, considering the existence of these doomed and miserable men, the true child of GOD must endeavour to persuade as many of those whom he has reason to suspect to be strangers to peace, as he has any opportunity of influencing, to see things *as they are*, and return to GOD through CHRIST. And whereas

they can get to peace only through the knowledge of the truth, the messenger of mercy must first of all make that known to them. "GOD hath concluded all under sin that He may have mercy upon all. Repent then, and believe the Gospel. Look to CHRIST for salvation ; yield yourself to Him, as alive from the dead, and your members as servants of righteousness unto holiness. Then seek to abide in CHRIST, from Whom you are to draw your new life, by prayer and the other means of grace. Try henceforth to live as much as possible after His example, in piety, humility, love, and good works. Thus you will acquire, and thus you will retain, His peace."

This in brief, or something like this, would be the message of Truth which the Christian ought to bear to those who have not known the way of peace, that they may enter thereon. He will find them, alas, numerous enough. He must ask of his GOD to give him opportunities, and courage to use them. He must not be afraid of giving offence, and indeed if he act with gentleness and humility, few will resent his appeal. Some there may be indeed whose hearts are hardened by the mysterious judgment of GOD,—souls once converted, but now backslidden, on whom the sentence of death is passed ! Mercifully, their state is hidden from him ; and his efforts for their good though fruitless, so far as they are concerned, will still be blest to himself by strengthening his faith and his submission to GOD. But others will not seriously resist his loving and earnest endeavours for their good.

At first indeed his words may stir up the demon of

self-will which lurks in every unconverted heart ; but if he persevere in his efforts and his prayers, the difficulty will be overcome, and a heart won for JESUS. And oh, who can express the joy of this ! What an honour to have been instrumental in bringing to the way of peace but *one* soul dear to GOD ! With what favour and love will He regard that servant who has brought His enemies to His feet or rather into His arms and to His heart. And what a joy will it be for thee, O Christian, to meet in the after-life persons whom here thou hast helped to save, and to see the heavenly Resurrection-smile of men and women who, but for thee, perhaps had never escaped from the power of sin, or gained an entrance into those abodes of bliss.

*The Christian as an English Churchman.*

As a member of the English Branch of the Church Catholic, the Christian of Britain, America, or the Colonies, has to witness for the truth of the tradition in the Apostolic and primitive form in which it has flowed down to him, from the very first century of Christianity.

Christianity in the world at large is at the present day disfigured by novelties. The Church of Rome believes more, Dissenters believe less, than the Faith once delivered to the Saints, and cherished in the first centuries of our Religion. All that the Anglican Communion holds as her form of doctrine can be proved to have been held "always, everywhere, and by all" Christians, (till within the last three centuries,)

who all with one consent have found Church teaching to be Bible truth.

For this truth the Christian must "earnestly contend." Of course on suitable occasions. It is not wise *always* to defend one's faith. When it is assailed by the captious or those who are incapable of so much as understanding an historical Christianity, or who argue for the sake of fortifying their own opinions, not in the childlike spirit of a desire for wisdom, then, at least in ordinary mouths, silence is golden. When there is occasion to give a reason of the faith that is in us, let it be done with meekness and fear, briefly, succinctly, and once for all, with a firm determination not to be led into a discussion, but only to reply to what seems an honest and earnest argument against the Truth as thus set forth. After all, human reasoning will do little to convince gainsayers, but calmness, moderation, and charity, will be a mighty weapon to bring them over. As they see how quiet and self-possessed you are, how indifferent as to the display of your own art or learning, how ready to leave all the human glory of the discussion in their hands, because the Divine truth of it is felt by you to be safe in the hands of GOD, they will feel that GOD is on your side, and therefore the Truth must be there, little as they can see it. But truths they see not now they will if in earnest come to see later, as the experiences of life and the needs of their own soul give a light to them which is more than logic.

*As a Parishioner.*

To glance for a moment at parish life. It is need-



less to say that the true servant of CHRIST will not oppose his parish priest, although if he does anything needlessly unpopular, or neglects any obvious duty, it would be only kindness to make him aware of it. On the other hand in all his efforts for the good of his parishioners the true man will give him his hearty support. When he seeks to bring the means of grace within the reach of all, to establish daily prayer, to observe the Feasts and Fast-days, to increase Celebrations, to improve his services, to have a worthy Church and Ritual, (for as the King's daughter is all glorious within, so is her clothing too of wrought gold,) to make provision for prayer-meetings, missionary meetings, and Bible classes for different orders among the people; to increase the efficiency of the Sunday Schools, by establishing an harmonious system of instruction and discipline, to extend his influence over individual souls, and to stimulate the earnest when they are converted to strengthen their brethren, in a word, as in various ways he seeks to "satisfy the various needs of the congregation"<sup>1</sup> committed to his charge, the faithful among them will do what they can to help in the work of Truth and Peace in the hands of him who is set over them in the LORD with constant prayer for the Divine Blessing. Thus the parish, a miniature Jerusalem, shall be like a city that is at unity in itself. "Peace within her walls, and plenteousness within her palaces. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem."<sup>2</sup> Remember your parish nightly before God.

<sup>1</sup> Tholuck.<sup>2</sup> Ps. cxxii

*As a Catholic.*

All Christians have a duty besides what they owe to their parish or their branch of the Church, viz. to the Catholic Church throughout the world. Nor would I here limit the word to those portions of the visible Church which are regular in their Constitution and their Orders. Other Churches, not so correct in their structure, may be sounder in their doctrine than even *that* Church which claims exclusive right to the name of Catholic.

All *baptized* persons are universally held to belong in some sense to the Christian Church; and remission of post-baptismal sin may be bestowed by CHRIST as we have seen, in countless ways, and it is certain that love to CHRIST, and in a measure to the brethren too, is found in members of non-Catholic communities. In any case, the more they come short, the more should those more highly privileged excel: the more too should the latter seek to supply that which is lacking in the doctrine or the service of their brethren. Surely we ought to pray, more than we do, for the peace of Jerusalem, including in that sacred designation all who profess and call themselves Christians, all who having received a Christian name are thereby already set apart for CHRIST. And, although we cannot give up any portion of the ancient Truth for the sake of unity,—for that Truth is not ours to give up, it is only lent us to maintain and manifest,—still much might be done to attract our fellow-Christians to that Truth by sympathy with them in those things in which they already hold it.

It is surely not the part of Churchmen to be angry or impatient with Dissenters. No, they should rather be pitiful and unwearied like their Master—holding out to them the right hand of fellowship, and endeavouring to restore the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.<sup>1</sup> CHRIST has called us into one Body : as long as we are dissevered, all are losers. The peace of Christians will never be perfect, so long as there is imperfect obedience, and that will be to the end. But let us at least work in that direction ; let us seek to obey better, and thus in a measure fulfil His thought that “all may be one,”<sup>2</sup> and thus we shall “follow after the things which make for peace and things wherewith one may edify another.”<sup>3</sup> GOD Who placed man at first in an atmosphere of Peace, now hath called us in CHRIST into such a region.<sup>4</sup>

All who long for the blessed consummation of the unity of the Church of CHRIST would do well to use the Prayer of the Association for the Promotion of the Union of Christendom :

“O LORD JESU CHRIST, Who saidst unto Thine Apostles, ‘Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you,’ regard not my sins, but the faith of Thy Church, and grant unto her that peace and unity which is agreeable to Thy will, Who livest and reignest GOD, world without end. Amen.”

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iv. 3.

<sup>2</sup> S. John xvii. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. xiv. 19.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 15.

## CHAPTER IX.

## OBSTACLES TO PEACE ARISING FROM WITHIN.

“Two souls, alas, within this bosom dwell.”<sup>1</sup>

**B**UT, it may be asked, will the Christian who strives to obey the commandments of GOD, using diligently all the means of grace, and as much as lieth in him, following peace with all men, enjoy indeed in himself a fulness of peace such as might be compared to a river? He would, we must reply on the faith of GOD's sure promise; he would, if he could indeed obey *all* GOD's commandments. But he has great obstacles to overcome, obstacles arising both from within and from outward circumstances.

1. *The evil nature.*

His greatest internal obstacle springs from the evil nature which still dwelleth in him. It is true he has laid down his old self at the foot of the Cross: he has *wished* to lay it down, he *has* laid it down as much as could in the nature of things be done: he has repented, and determined to obey; he has believed, and been forgiven; he has given up his will to the service of CHRIST, and his wish and resolution is, never to serve self or sin any more. He can now, like S. Paul, truly say, “I delight in the law of GOD after the inward man.” Like him however he must add, “I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of *sin*, which is my members.”

<sup>1</sup> “Zwei seelen wehnen, ach, in dieser Brust.”—GÖTTE.

"I know that in me, that is, in my flesh dwelleth no good thing."<sup>1</sup> "In my flesh," thus the Apostle gives a name to that part of him which is evil and continues to give trouble through its opposition to his true self, his real will. So also in his Epistle to the Galatians, he mentions *the flesh* as the fruitful source of evil. "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like."<sup>2</sup> Our LORD Himself speaks of the flesh as the evil in man's nature, in opposition to the Spirit. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."<sup>3</sup> In the same chapter He speaks of the new birth of water and of the Spirit as the beginning of the life of the spirit. From the mention of water here in conjunction with the Spirit,<sup>4</sup> the Church has understood our LORD to teach that persons were to be born of the Spirit in Holy Baptism, and to have that new life which is spiritual begun there.

We understand accordingly that it was at the font that the Spirit began the spiritual life in us, a life which is as really within us as the life of the flesh. S. Paul speaks of these two internal forces, flesh and spirit, under another—a slightly different—figure, when he calls the spiritual life the "new man" and the flesh the "old man."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vii. 22, 23, 18.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. v. 19—21.

<sup>3</sup> S. John iii. 6.

<sup>4</sup> S. John iii. 3, 5.

<sup>5</sup> Eph. iv. 22, 24.

The latter is essentially bad ; lying, wrath, anger, corrupt words, and such like, are some of his works. He is the same that our LORD speaks of in S. Matt. xv., where He calls it "the heart,"—"Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies ; these are the things which defile a man." To say that this heart is extracted at a man's conversion is a fable, for as we have just seen our LORD speaks of the flesh and spirit continuing to be together in the same way, and S. Paul bids Christians "put off the old man, and put on the new." And he brings out this more fully in Galatians v., where, speaking of the conflict between the old and the new nature, he says that "the flesh lusteth or contendeth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." That is, the will has not full power to act as it would, on account of the opposition of the flesh to the Spirit and to it. The will, of course, has in the case supposed given itself up to CHRIST, and is entirely on the side of the HOLY SPIRIT ; only it is hampered and hindered by that other and evil nature or power within. Now it is an undoubted fact that in this struggle the latter often gets the upper hand. Often again the better nature succeeds only after a terrible conflict. Hence the Christian's peace is sorely disturbed and marred by his enemy the flesh.

## 2. *Obstacles. The World and the Devil.*

The Flesh is his worst enemy. But besides it, he has the world and the devil. The world, with its

enticements and snares, having a mysterious force in it to draw away the soul after itself, and make it forget GOD and obedience. The devil, too, comes to steal, and to kill, and to destroy,<sup>1</sup> where he can. Too shrewd to waste his energies upon souls which dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and are braced by prayer and all the means of grace, he yet knows how to seize on opportune moments to tempt even these,—

“Principalities and powers,  
Mustering their unseen array,  
Wait for thy unguarded hours.  
‘Watch and pray.’”

When the servant of GOD is off his guard, he will send a breath of lust or malice through his soul. When his spiritual vigour is reduced by sorrow, privation, or sickness, he will whisper discontent or distrust in GOD’s love. His power is great against the Saints, when he has a chance to exercise it. As for the thoughtless, he leads them captive at his will. By him they are drawn away into whatever sin seems to offer : and it is with a deep truth that the law of the land declares of any one convicted of crime, that it was done “at the instigation of the devil.”

Still, neither the world nor the devil could have any power at all to disturb the Christian’s peace, were it not for the flesh—the evil in *himself*. Nothing can come of a seed unless it is blown upon congenial soil, and temptations from without would be quite harmless if they could not be taken up and cherished by the man himself.

<sup>1</sup> S. John x. 10.

Hence the Flesh is the great enemy, and if a man fight well *there*, he may defy all foes without. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

### 3. *Why God permits Temptations.*

"For GOD is not tempted of evil, neither tempteth He any man."—S. James i. 13.

But why is it that the Christian, who has entirely given himself up to JESUS, is not delivered from all those difficulties and temptations, and made at once partaker of perfect peace? Such a thought occurs at times to all of us. The SON of GOD can, if He please, cleanse me every whit. Then why does He not? Why does not He, who *can* do all things, put an end for ever to this warfare, by silencing the opposition within me to *His* will, which is also really *mine*? Why does not that God, Who holds the lightning and tempests in His Hand, also hold back those evil thoughts which come to spoil my peace and endanger my salvation? He is holy, and holds sin in detestation; must it not then be as much against His wishes as it is against my own, that such evil things should exist in me, defiling the courts of the LORD'S house,—my soul, my heart, my *brain*?

The following considerations may help us in finding an answer to these questions:—It is not that GOD is not Almighty and most holy, as well as all-loving, and most gracious, He is all this. But observe, GOD cannot prevent these evil thoughts, no more than He can prevent Satan from going about as a roaring lion



or as a wolf, ever and anon snatching away a lamb out of the fold of the Good Shepherd. "Cannot, what, GOD cannot! But is He not Almighty?" He is, but mark, He has been pleased to *limit* His power, so that in these matters He is *not* for the present Omnipotent. There is now the "*hiding of His power.*"<sup>1</sup>

When God determined to create us, He was pleased to determine we should be free. He desired that we should serve Him indeed, but only of our own free choice. Now, if man was to be free, and serve God of his own choice, that implied that he might also choose not to serve God. And God would not prevent this. For His own wise ends, He permitted man to sin and evil to exist, if man would have it so. He determined not to force him. He limited His own power. He said, I choose not to prevent man from using his freedom ill, from sinning. God knew that sin once introduced into the world, would involve very awful consequences which He could no longer prevent. Sin is disobedience, and disobedience means eternal death. Sin could be removed only by pardon and return to obedience. The former could only be obtained through His Own SON dying for the guilty, and the return to perfect obedience could only be a matter of time and labour. The evil nature could be replaced only gradually by the good; the flesh subdued only in course of time by the Spirit. So long as the evil nature was there at all, it must produce evil. As certainly as noxious vapours must ascend from the malarious pool, thoughts of evil must rise up

<sup>1</sup> Hab. iii. 4.

out of the heart. That which is born of the flesh must be flesh, until the Spirit kills it with that which is born of *it*. The corrupt tree must bring forth corrupt fruit, until the good tree planted alongside of it should have drawn away all its nourishment and so killed its roots. Hence evil thoughts and temptations are, for the time being, a necessity. GOD cannot prevent them: cannot, that is, without changing all His plan from the beginning, and going on a new principle, and determining to make out of us only holy, obedient machines, instead of reasonable, holy and lively sacrifices; willing and obedient children, who have freely chosen His blessed service, and won for Him the throne of their hearts, through a long life-battle against the evil that was within them.

Remember, however, this limitation of His power is only for a time, for it is written, "The GOD of Peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."<sup>1</sup>

But although GOD has been pleased for a time to limit His power, He has not, blessed be His holy Name, in any wise limited His love. Indeed the limitation of His power is itself a proof of the infinitude of His love. For it was because He loved us so dearly that He wished to make such glorious creatures out of us, beings at first made free, and who having lost their liberty, found it again by subduing their enemy, and regaining themselves for His service. Can we indeed doubt that He has set no limits to His love, He Who to save us spared not His own dear SON?

But let no one mistake or misapply this truth.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xvi. 20.

The limiting of His power does not apply to the force of the grace He gives us. Though GOD cannot prevent these tempting thoughts, He gives us grace enough to resist them. "The LORD's arm is not shortened that it cannot *save*." "GOD is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able." "My grace is sufficient for thee."<sup>1</sup>

And while His power and grace are sufficient to keep His servant from sinning, if he will but do his part and lean on CHRIST, His *will* is fully on his side. "It is not the will of your FATHER that is in Heaven that one of these little ones perish." "He willeth that all men should be saved."<sup>2</sup> All that He can, short of forcing us to obey Him, He will do; He does incessantly. And His eye of love looks eagerly to see the fragile bark of our life rising one by one over each wave of temptation, as standing on the shore of eternity He watches its progress, yearning to welcome it safe into His blessed Haven; watches as a father might watch the vessel which brought home to him his long-lost son.

Meanwhile, however, the strife goes on. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." What a scene of conflict is often presented by the human soul. What struggles are here, what advances, what retreats, what surprises, what triumphs, what disasters! The idea of peace in the midst of all this! We sometimes think, is it possible that there can be peace, so long as there is temptation and the possibility of sin? What, *peace*,

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lix. 1; 1 Cor. x. 13; 2 Cor. xii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matt. xviii. 14.

with evil thoughts within, and Satan's whispers without?

Yes, there must be such a thing. The words of Isaiah declare it, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace (lit. *in peace, peace*) whose mind is stayed on Thee."<sup>1</sup> "Great peace," says David, "have they who love Thy law."<sup>2</sup> JESUS has given it as His bequest, "Peace I leave with you." "These things," He said, "I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation. But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."<sup>3</sup> True there is war, there must be fighting, yet at the same time peace in the very midst of war. It is peace *in Christ* even while engaged in the struggle with sin and temptation, the Devil and self-will. Or shall we rather say, that in answer to His servant's cry, CHRIST comes to the tried man and lifts him up *above* the tumult of passion and the war of unhallowed desire? Down below on the plain there are the contending forces, the clash of steel, the thunder of artillery. Up on the mountain top there is peace with JESUS. Down below, the desires and passions warring; the flesh striving against the Spirit; the old man trying to strangle the new; one impulse dragging the victim one way, another trying to draw him in the opposite direction; a thing forbidden desired, and with difficulty resisted, a hard duty insisting upon being done; *interest*, or what seems so, seeking to override duty; the human nature not subject to the highest will, but requiring to be put down and kept under, yet ever

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xxvi. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. cxix. 165.

<sup>3</sup> S. John xiv. 27; xvi. 33.

like a Titan under a volcano, making its presence felt by dark volumes of smoke and sulphurous flames ; a scene, in one word, of the utmost confusion and war, the very reverse, one would say, of peace. No wonder if, distracted and half-maddened by the clamour, the believer is fain to join his cry to the Apostle's when wearied with the strife of "the law in his members warring against the law of his mind and threatening to bring him again into captivity to the law of sin," he exclaimed, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?"<sup>1</sup> Then the same cheering answer will come back to him as was given to S. Paul, "I thank GOD through JESUS CHRIST our LORD."

JESUS CHRIST Himself will come in answer to his prayer, arising up out of the depths of his inner self, where He has graciously taken up His abode.<sup>2</sup> He will stand on the troubled waters and restore order, saying, Peace, be still. He will lift His servant above the scene of contention, and carry him to a quiet place to rest awhile with Him.

There with his hand in His, and clinging close to His side, he will be able to look down with calmness on life ; the path of duty, no longer doubtful, will be seen plain before his face, his enemies he will feel to be half vanquished already, the peace of JESUS will take complete possession of his soul.

"Go, return on thy way," the Captain of his salvation will say to him, "fight the good fight of faith, lay hold of eternal life. Fear not, I am with thee. Be not dismayed, I am thy GOD. Neither the powers of evil, nor yet thine own evil heart shall have power to

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vii. 23—25.

<sup>2</sup> S. John xiv. 23 ; vi. 56.

pluck thee out of My hand. Have not I commanded thee? be strong and of a good courage, for the LORD thy GOD is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”<sup>1</sup> Thus strengthened by the power of JESUS, realised and appropriated with all the fervour of grateful love, the Christian can return to the work and warfare of life with a divine calm pervading all his liberated soul.

“ Peaceful and calm the tide of life,  
When first I sailed with Thee,  
My sins forgiven—no inward strife,  
My breast a glassy sea.

“ But soon the storm of passion raves,  
My soul is tempest-tossed,  
Corruptions rise like angry waves,—  
Help, Master, I am lost.

“ ‘Peace, peace, be still, thou raging breast,  
My fulness is for thee.’  
The SAVIOUR speaks, and all is rest,  
Like the waves of Galilee.”<sup>2</sup>

#### 4. *Self-righteousness.*

“ Thus would I live ; yet now  
Not I, but He,  
In all His power and love,  
Henceforth alive in me.”

This is a very fatal barrier to peace, and a more common one than many think. It may be very true that there are few who fall into the error, which certain good people imagine to be almost a universal

<sup>1</sup> Josh. i. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Mc'Cheyne's Songs of Sion.

one, of trying for acceptance through their own good works. This error, which is simple ignorance alike of the smallness of human excellence and the vastness of Divine salvation, is almost exploded in these days. But self-righteousness, the notion of one's own merits, is too natural a vice not to appear in some form or other. Hence it reappears under the head of Sanctification, after disappearing from the sphere of Justification; and persons who quite see they can do nothing to earn mercy, yet fancy that, once justified and forgiven, they can to some extent by their own powers work out their holiness. They own they cannot atone for their sins, and they see no necessity for wishing to try, since they are perfectly confident that CHRIST has completed that part of the work. But still they think they can and must "work out their salvation," i.e. sanctification.

But this in fact is quite as hopelessly impossible as the other. And it is not at all the Gospel plan. Sanctification not through our own efforts, but through Another, that Other being the LORD our Righteousness,—this is the object of the Gospel. "In the LORD have I righteousness and strength." "He of GOD is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."<sup>1</sup> "Not I, but CHRIST in me."

Until this is realised and submitted to, the peace of the Christian will be much hindered. Especially at times of unusual earnestness, when the claims of God's Law for Christians come home to him in all its exactingness and severity, he will be sensible of his

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. i. 30.

miserable insufficiency, and be ready to despair until the light is poured into his being, which reveals his mistake, and shows that CHRIST is to do it all in him and by him.

I remember a friend being once led to this discovery, and he ever remembered the occasion as one of the epochs in his spiritual history. He was at the time a missionary in a mining population in a colony but recently settled, and his week-day work being light, he had too much time for theological study. The natural consequence was that he became bewildered. The whole of religion seemed to lie in a dreary mist of doubt, and the obedience required of the Christian, the newness of life in which he was expected to walk, the holiness of thought as well as conduct, the devotion to GOD, the superiority to the world which were required of him, all this seemed so hopelessly unreasonable, so dreadfully unattainable, that for days he was the victim of a consuming despair.

It was the week before the Festival of Whitsun Day. And as the sacred day drew near, he eagerly looked and longed for a visit from that Divine Spirit, Who had been promised to guide into all truth by taking of the things of CHRIST and showing them to His own. Nor did he look in vain. It is true the Day itself passed without casting even a ray of light into the gloom ; but not many days after the Divine visitation came to him as he was reading the Epistle to the Romans. He was sitting at the moment amid rocks overhanging a mighty river, which, swollen with the freshets, roared along in fury far beneath, a picture of wildness and of power ; and as he read, the words of



Holy Scripture came to his intelligence with a power more mighty than was indicated by the tumult of the torrent. The words were these, "*Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*"<sup>1</sup>

In a moment it flashed upon his soul that CHRIST was to be everything for him, and in the same moment the chains of self-righteousness fell from off him, and he was free. He rose, he bounded from the scene of his deliverance, leaping, and walking, and praising GOD. And thenceforth for days and years he was enabled to go forward in the strength of this Divine manifestation, feeling that "he was nothing, CHRIST was all;" that it was CHRIST acting in him and through him, and not he acting at all apart from CHRIST; that the SON of GOD was doing His own work in His servant's soul and by His servant's hand; that the care of the whole thing might consequently be left in His Hands, Who would be sure to accomplish all the good pleasure of His goodness in His own time and in His own way.

Thus we see how self-righteousness, miserable barrier to peace because it sets self in place of CHRIST,—self, that false thing which is the cause of man's peacelessness,—vanishes before obedience to GOD's command to believe in the Name of His SON. Would it but vanish once and for ever! But alas, soon the devil attempts again to erect this old wall of separation from peace; nay, he usually sets about rebuilding it the moment after it is cast down. Were this enemy subdued, did the Christian but learn to live in CHRIST

<sup>1</sup> Rom. iii. 24.

and let Him work, being ready only to act as His agent, not indeed as the servant who knoweth not what his lord doeth, but as the friend, freely, intelligently, lovingly fulfilling all CHRIST'S will, and drawing ever-needed supplies of grace from Him, then would his peace be great and secure. Whatever outward foes might molest him, he would have peace within. "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in Me ye shall have peace."

### 5. *Indolence.*

Indolence or sloth, though properly one of the works of the flesh, and as such already treated, is still so fearful a foe to peace that it is advisable to call the Christian's special attention to it. We have just seen that we are to live in and by CHRIST alone, Whom we are to suffer to act in and by us. Not less true is it, that we are to work out our salvation; to give diligence; not be weary in well-doing; run the race that is set before us, and strive (agonize) to enter in at the strait gate. In a word, we are to do everything by faith in CHRIST: not the less are we to do everything.

Now CHRIST gives us His peace through pardon, that we may serve Him diligently with a quiet mind. Peace we saw was the condition in which man could freely energize in GOD'S service. Having received it, he must give all diligence. He must devote himself entirely to GOD, setting Him first in his affections and his work, and labouring to serve Him, and serve Him to the best of his ability in all things. There must be

no intention to serve Him partially where it suits one's convenience,—such divided service is worthy neither of us nor of Him. Like Mary we must choose the better part ; like S. Paul resolve, *This one thing I do.* We must mean to serve Him, cost what it may, however unpleasant or dishonourable in the eyes of men any piece of service to which He calls us may be. Our *first* desire must be to know His will, our *second*, to do it with all our might. As to the knowing of His will, He will certainly and unerringly guide us, if we ask Him ; He will not deceive us nor allow us to deceive ourselves, if only we are honest in our determination to serve Him and not self in any form. Do not let us think He can mislead us. Do not let us waver and hesitate about what His will is when once He has made it known (by whatever means He may have been pleased to choose) to our inmost souls. To doubt and wonder as to whether this or that is His will, after He has distinctly told us, is to render our service vacillating and valueless.

Next, let us set about the doing of it. And in the way that comes first to hand. Not

“ Seeking for some great thing to do,  
Or secret thing to know,”

but being content to serve Him in any way, however little ; knowing that nothing can be really little which is done for so great a GOD. Only, no sloth or indolence in His service ; but full activity becoming redeemed men, whose time on earth is short, and who have an immense work before us.

And as peace is given us that we may thus actively

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serve GOD, so is peace the result of such service. This is His reward even in this life to those who diligently serve Him. They have a quiet mind. Their sacred energy allows them no time to murmur. Their heart fixed on such high service entirely banishes discontent. Whatever may occur to distress them they know GOD dwells in the calm of eternity, and they look up to Him. They enter when pressed into the joy of their LORD. They take refuge under the shadow of His wing.

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## CHAPTER X.

### OBSTACLES TO PEACE ARISING FROM CIRCUMSTANCES.

#### I. *Care.*

“Laissez couler les eaux sous les ponts.”—FENELON.

“**L**IVE in the centre,” said one, “and the circumference will adjust itself.”<sup>1</sup> Live by faith in the SON of GOD, and your outward life may take care of itself. Nothing ought in such a case seriously to interfere with your equanimity, to ruffle your spirit, to harass and distress you. Let not your heart be troubled. The cares of this life are mentioned by our LORD, along with riches and pleasures, among the things which

<sup>1</sup> “To be at the Centre of that Motion where is everlasting rest ; even here, to dwell in heaven, where all hearts are stayed, and every wish fulfilled.”—*Archdeacon Manning*.

choke the Word<sup>1</sup> and destroy the souls of men. We are distinctly commanded throughout all the Bible not to suffer ourselves to be burdened with earthly care, but to cast our burden on the LORD. Consider this, father of the family, husband, bread-winner, often tempted to be full of care about those precious little ones whom God hath lent thee ; wondering at times where bread and raiment will be got for them ; anxious about thy darling down with fever ; anxious about thy first-born far from home. Remember this, gentle, weary mother, who in thy lowly dwelling art encompassed with children and with work clamouring to be done. Consider this, high and low, rich and poor, for ye are all in danger of being oppressed and made miserable by anxiety about some one thing or person. Care is a dangerous as well as a fearful thing. Care is a thing not permitted by your Master. He who is pleased to require you to cast your care on Him, is displeased when you bear it alone. "Take no thought," i.e. be not anxious, "about to-morrow." "I would have you without carefulness." "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." Do this each moment that the burdensome thought would return. Look away from it. Say to God, "Thou seest I really cannot bear this myself, wilt Thou bear it for me?" Then forget it, and go on with your work. So shall you have peace, through obedience.

"Let the waters flow away under the bridges. Let men be as they are, weak, false, conceited, arrogant. Let the world be as it is. Thou wilt not prevent it. But as for thee, remain thou on the heart of God,

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke viii. 14.

Who sees all those evils better than thou dost thyself, and yet permits them. Content thyself to do the little that is binding on thee, at once, without losing temper ; and as for everything else, let it be to thee as though it were not."<sup>1</sup>

Yet let not these words of Fenelon, or anything stated in this treatise, be so construed as though the writer would advocate a philosophical indifferentism or stoical apathy. Far from it. My position is, we are to submit to the FATHER'S will, in adverse circumstances to cast our care on Him. It by no means follows we are to sit with folded hands, neglecting to do our duty in that state of life unto which it has pleased GOD to call us. Nay, rather, while we commit our way unto the LORD that He may bring it to pass, we for our parts must

" Be up and doing  
With a heart for any fate,  
Still achieving, still pursuing,  
Learn to labour and to wait."

It is our duty not to lose heart, but in the strength of faith to rise to do battle with adverse circumstances, like those saints of old who through faith subdued kingdoms, and turned to flight the armies of the alien. When evil hinders us, we must remember that evil is of the devil, and that we must overcome evil with good. It may be very well for cowards to sit down in an indolence which they mistake for faith : but thus it must not be with the chosen of the LORD, who

<sup>1</sup> Fenelon, *Lettres Spirituelles*, quoted by Martensen, *Ethik*, p. 468.



hope one day to follow the Lamb in His great campaign.<sup>1</sup>

“That which in mean men we entitle patience  
Is pale, cold cowardice in noble breasts.”<sup>2</sup>

Peace, not in giving in and sitting down to die, but in nobly contending to the last, is what He promises, whose peace bore Him through Gethsemane and Calvary. Peace in fighting and triumphing, this and none other is the Peace of CHRIST.

## 2. *Want.*

“My time is in Thy hand.”—Ps. xxxi. 17.

Even in want and destitution, the soul that relies on GOD and keeps His commandments will have peace.

Take an extreme case. The man, we will suppose, is destitute, absolutely without money or effects. Moreover, he has no friends. He is hungry: He is in rags: worse still, his children round him are crying out for bread, and he has none to give them. Shall we not expect that in such circumstances peace of mind will be an impossibility?

Not if he obeys GOD! Has not GOD commanded him not to let his heart be troubled, but to believe in Him and on JESUS CHRIST instead?<sup>3</sup> Has He not said, “Take no thought,” (i.e. have no care) “for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body what ye shall put on?”<sup>4</sup> Has He

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xvii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Richard II.

<sup>3</sup> S. John xiv. 1.

<sup>4</sup> S. Matth. vi. 31.

not said, "Be careful for *nothing*, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."<sup>1</sup> *This*, then, is the thing the destitute has to do: Tell God of his trouble. And this is the thing he must *not* do: Make himself miserable about it. If he is obedient, the mere act of telling it to GOD will give him a measure of peace, his FATHER may by some kind providence come at once to his relief. He will either do something for him with His own hand—how often do we not hear of wonderful cases of relief!—or He will inspire him with something to do for himself, so as to be delivered out of his misery. If GOD is not pleased to relieve him, He will assuredly give him quietness of mind. No one may deny this, who has not put it to the proof. Most of my readers, doubtless, have done so many a time. Once in far distant lands, lost amid the mountains, with no prospect before me but starvation and death, I cried unto the LORD, and He heard me. He said, "Fear not, for I am with thee," and I had peace. Before many hours had passed, a Frenchman, chancing to pass that way in quest of some cattle, came providentially to where I wandered, and so saved me.

Every Christian biography contains such experience,—cases of extreme distress, when the child of God did not despair, but in obedience to the Divine command first made his case known to God, and then rose to do what little he could do, calmly, solemnly, as if all was over, and there only remained for him to die as a Christian should.

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iv. 6.

“ When obstacles like prison walls  
 Around me seem to be,  
 I do the little I can do,  
 And leave the rest to Thee.”

But it is not an occasional pinch that tries a man's faith and obedience most, or most endangers his peace. It is the long, hard pressure of penury from day to day, the pangs of hunger and stinted life and action, and the wretched looks of those one loves. These are fearful trials indeed. Can the Christian's peace flow through such dark chasms as these? By obedience, it can. It requires indeed very close and prayerful attention to the will of GOD to retain peace in such emergencies. Yet, tried child of GOD, believe it, it is not *impossible* for thee to enjoy this even in the midst of all thy misery. If poverty be thy lot, or weary hours of languor, or of bodily pain, still turn thy mind to GOD, give up thy will to Him, trust in Him. “He will keep thee in perfect peace, if thy mind be stayed on Him.”<sup>1</sup> Remember, our SAVIOUR said there was a special blessing for the poor. He chose a beggar for His subject when He spoke of a man in Abraham's bosom, that is Paradise. He was a poor man Himself, content to live on alms, that He might teach us all that humbleness of mind is more God-like than pride and independence. Be content then to be poor, but “rich in faith, heir of the kingdom.” He hath said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, so that we may boldly say, The LORD is my helper.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xxvi. 3.

<sup>2</sup> S. James ii. 5 ; Heb. xiii. 5, 6.

A gentleman, walking in the country once, and not feeling sure of his way, left the road to call at a cottage a few yards off for information. It was but a poor, dilapidated place, and as he approached he heard a voice inside, and looking through a chink in the door, he saw a solitary woman. She sat on a stool, drawn to a table, in the midst of a wretched, unfurnished apartment. On the table was her dinner, seemingly, for it was none,—a crust of bread, and a tin mug of water, constituted all her repast. Before beginning, the stranger observed the poor woman draw her hands devoutly together, and looking up with a smile of sweet contentment, exclaim, "*This and Christ too !*"

Thus even amid extreme destitution, peace of mind is a possible thing.

### 3. *Sickness.*

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,  
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."<sup>1</sup>

This is worse than destitution, for it comes nearer to the centre of man's life. It does not necessarily touch the centre, but it readily does. How difficult for the soul to possess herself in peace when languor and sickness are wearing away her tenement and close companion, the body. Difficult, but, thank God, countless multitudes have succeeded in doing it. Faith has won the victory. Submission, loving acquiescence in the Will of Him Who is Love, has brought

<sup>1</sup> Cowper.

down grace to keep from sinking and to shed a heavenly calm over the agonised sufferer. The Christian even when racked with pain, is not entitled to utter one rebellious expression, or encourage himself for two moments together in a train of impatient thought. He dare not think, "How hard on me ! why me more than others?" He dare not be troubled ; he must believe. It is easy to succumb, when the Tempter suggests dark thoughts ; easy then to sink down into sulkiness and despair. But resist the devil only once, and resistance becomes easier next time. Grace will be given, if you use the grace you have got. "Grace sufficient for thee," never more, yet never less. Little by little, and hour by hour, and so day by day will strength to conquer be given thee. And if the sickness lasts, the days will grow into months, and the months into years, and the years into glory. "Your light affliction which is but for a moment, will work for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Long as the suffering may seem, it is short, if you will but consider how *long your real life is*. The endless, endless ages of eternity are before you, and what will it signify in a few short years to you, if God has taken days and months out of your active life on earth, and laid you on a sick bed to prepare you for His glory? Cast your eyes forward a little span of time and think that you, your own self, will be among the saints who have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb ! You will have become perfected through suffering ; you will have grown from a common-place man of the world

into a resemblance to JESUS the Crucified. Be content then to suffer !

“ Forasmuch as CHRIST has suffered in the flesh, *arm yourself* with the same mind, for he that hath suffered in the flesh *hath ceased from sin*, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.”<sup>1</sup>

Can you wonder after reading such words as these, that you should have to suffer? can you doubt that He Who hung upon the Cross for you, will help you in your sufferings now, and take you to His glory afterwards? You do not doubt it for a moment. Then murmur not against His loving will. Call upon Him continually. Yet a little while, and the clouds will pass away, and the clear light of His love will shine around you; and your days now so full of trouble will be bathed in sunshine. “ What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.”

What perfect peace is attainable even by those called to endure long years of sickness, the two following incidents may help to illustrate.

A young lady, suffering from spine-complaint, and unable to leave her room for the long period of fifteen years, writes thus to a friend : “ Our dear LORD permits me a very bright life in His service.”

A poor woman in Germany was laid up in an infirmary with a painful malady one and twenty years. She gave this as the result of her experience of God's dealings with her : “ For the first seven years,” she said, “ I murmured and rebelled ; for the second

<sup>1</sup> 1 S. Pet. iv. 1.

seven, I was resigned; but the last seven years I have been able to *rejoice*."

And you, too, believer, however sorely tried, will learn to rejoice in the will of GOD, and have peace like a river—and that within a shorter time than this poor sufferer required to attain it; if you will only determine at once entirely to give up your will to GOD and learn to obey all His commandments.

#### 4. *Bereavement.*

"O for the touch of a vanished hand,  
And the sound of a voice that is still!"

The loss of friends is indeed a heavy affliction. But in this case, too, though nature is not forbidden to weep, the Christian is commanded to overcome nature by grace, and "not sorrow as those without hope." And after the first outburst of grief, peace will come to the lonely mourner, if he but give himself up to GOD in CHRIST, and ask for submission to His will and grace to fulfil all His pleasure. Presently some word from the King of kings will be brought home to the mind requiring instant obedience, and in obeying the mind will forget to grieve. It may be a very humble piece of ordinary work that the bereaved man is bidden apply himself to; no matter, it is GOD's will, and doing it will bring its immediate reward.

I was told the other day about a labouring man, who after forty years of happy wedded life, was left a widower. He was a man of faith, whose will had through long years been wrought into harmony with

the will of his GOD. So what he did when his wife breathed her last was this : he sang to himself a hymn, and went out straightway to his work. Not for a moment did he fret or indulge in vain regrets. "I knew it was better with her where she has gone," he said, "why should I wish it otherwise?"

### 5. *Contempt, Detraction, Imprisonment.*

"Sick in the world's regard, wretched and low."

SHAKESPEAR.

These distresses, especially if they culminate in the loss of one's fair name, as in the case of Joseph or Jeremiah, are among the bitter experiences of life. The Blessed SAVIOUR endured them all to the full. "I am a worm and no man, a very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people." "Thou hast known my reproof, my shame, and my dishonour."<sup>1</sup>

The Saints of GOD in every age have to suffer reproach, but like their Master they must seek to preserve a calm and tranquil mind. This too by obedience to the voice of GOD. Fear not, He hath said, for I am with thee ; be not dismayed, for I am thy GOD. Fear not the reproach of man. It is only by firmly staying the heart upon the Rock of Ages that it can remain calm in the midst of the scorn or rage of men. Philosophy indeed can do much. The political orator who stood calm amid the yellings of a hostile mob, because he regarded them only as a number of "transitional phenomena" is a spectacle one loves to contemplate. But the Christian whose indifference to

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxii., lxix.



the opposition of men rests on his supreme faith in God, and obedience to His commands, holds a loftier position,—for he alone can be truly humble as well as truly great. It is from no consciousness of superiority in himself that he scorns the tumult of human passion, but from a knowledge that his life is hid with God. His God in Whom he trusts can restrain the rage of men, and even make it praise Him. He knows that it is a supreme mistake to despise any one, because he has read the life of the SON of GOD. He knows that it may be a noble thing to be despised, because the Despised and Rejected of Men is now King of the ages of the future. Therefore as he dare not despise, so he does not mind being despised if it is for the Truth's sake.

But if the contempt of men should become aggressive? If he should be seized and imprisoned? (Ah, the poor prisoners and captives, well may we remember them in the Litany.) Yes, even there, cast into the dungeon as Jeremiah was, can the peace of God keep His servant through the weary hours and days and nights. He knows it is not for ever; his time may seem long, but it is short; and he has all eternity before him. And from out his prison gloom he sees in golden letters the words over the porch of Heaven, "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My FATHER which is in Heaven."

## 6. *Despair.*

"Hope thou in GOD."—Ps. xlii.

There are moments of intense anguish in the lives of many, the cause of which may lie not exactly in

any one of the griefs I have mentioned,—want, sickness, bereavement, or opposition of men, although one or more of them may contribute. King David knew such an experience when he sang, “Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me.” Again, when driven from his capital by his own son, the broken-hearted monarch mourned, “My God, my soul is vexed within me. Deep calleth unto deep; all Thy waves and billows are gone over me.”<sup>1</sup> And the Son of David knew it when on the Cross He cried, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Yet even then could He say, “My God,” and this is the secret of deliverance from despair. A man may be thoroughly miserable and utterly cast down, all supports knocked from under him, reason itself tottering to its fall, but if in that moment of thickening gloom he can still feel that God exists, and in some sense that God is his, he is saved. I knew one so situated,—deserted, alone in far off lands, racked with mental agony, ready to sink into some unknown abyss, reason itself trembling on the brink of destruction, Fidelis was enabled to put forth a groping hand into the dark, the words “My God” were uttered by his lips,—immediately the demons of despair and insanity departed. God sent from heaven upon him gentle sleep, and on his awaking, calm, collected, free from pain, there stood before him a dear old friend, a type of the Unseen, who had not forsaken him.

Without this sense of God, despair often culminates in madness, and madness often ends in suicide.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lv. 5; xlii. 7, 8.

One summer evening late, a lady was crossing a bridge over a river near her home, and observing a man leaning over the side and looking upon the stream, it occurred to her that he was there meditating self-destruction. As she passed, he turned and addressed her in a peculiar and flurried tone, saying some such words as "Fine night,—beautiful river."

"Yes," she replied, "but I have just been thinking of that river 'the streams of which make glad the city of our God,'—the River of Peace."

"Peace!" said the man; "what is peace?"

"Peace," she answered, "is to be had with GOD, through JESUS CHRIST; and if you do not know what it is, go home, and seek it upon your knees."

On reaching her home, the lady told her husband what had occurred. "I hope you gave him in charge of the police," he said.

"In charge of Heaven's police I have put him," was the reply.

Years passed away, and it chanced that this lady found herself in a crowded assembly in London, when she was accosted by a man who addressed her thus, "You do not know me, madam, but—'*there is a River*, the streams of which make glad the city of our God.' You remember," he went on, "that summer evening when you spoke to a man on the bridge at ——? I was that man. You spoke to me of peace. You bade me go home and seek it on my knees, I did as you said, and you have been the means of saving me not only from suicide, but from the wretchedness of a life without God."

She had called his thoughts by that word of Scrip-

ture,—or GOD had called them through her,—from that river wherein he had been contemplating to end his miseries by an act of daring defiance of the command, “Thou shalt not kill,” to another river, of peace and joy, in obedience to the will of the Supreme, a river in whose calm waters his spirit should find consolation, and on whose bright bosom he could be borne not to death, but to life eternal. “The River of GOD is full of water.” Oh, that every soul who has found the bitterness of earthly streams would come and drink.

What is a man to do when all earthly hopes fail ; when “oppressed with the gloom of night, and the dark misty shadows of time,” he is in danger of sinking beneath the wave of hopeless despair? Why then he must set himself at once to obey GOD’s command, to trust in Him, and do His work. The bad quarter of an hour<sup>1</sup> which has come upon him is indeed of the Devil, the prince of darkness, and is to be fought against with vigour. Perhaps he has no vigour, still he has enough to make himself miserable, and what says that sweet poetess Mrs. Barrett Browning?

“Trust with all the strength thou usest  
In embracing thy despair.”

Yes, the same thought which would otherwise have gone to swell his misery, “Oh, how wretched am I,” may be given to raise him out of it. “Oh CHRIST, save me. See, I sink in deep waters where no ground is ; O Lamb of GOD, grant me Thy peace.”

<sup>1</sup> Mauvais quart d’heure.

### 7. *Old Age.*

“Even to your old age, I am He ; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you.”—Isa. xlv. 4.

This period of life has trials all its own. In the Christian who has lived in the activity of seriousness, the mind rarely decays into the imbecility of second childhood, but it retains much of its old energy while the bodily strength goes downwards to the grave. Hence the corruptible body presseth down the incorruptible soul, and while the latter is full of desires and activities, its tenement of clay holds it in perpetual check. Then, there is the contrast between present helplessness and the energy of bygone days ; the painful feeling as if one had lived too long, and was only in the way. Indeed it may well be questioned whether long life be so great a boon as many seem to suppose. Certainly its trials are very keen, and there is no relief from them in active occupation. Hence every sorrow is felt more by the aged than by the young. Truly, “fears are in the way, and the grasshopper is a burden.”<sup>1</sup> He longs for rest and not to be annoyed, but there is not a cause of vexation within his reach that he will not be told about and take home. Impatience, petulance, and a fretful temper are the besetting sins of age ; saving in those very few who have trained themselves by long years of discipline to obedience and submission unto God, and have in consequence reached an atmosphere of calm,

“Above all pain,  
Yet pitying all distress.”

<sup>1</sup> Eccles. xii. 5.

For such indeed there are, and it is a blessed privilege to have known them, the possessors of a glorious and holy old age, which is even as a crown of glory. Ripened wisdom, expansive love, chastened will, genial temper, peace and gentleness, and kindly interest in every one near and dear, as well as in events transpiring in the great world beyond, whilst withal the soul lives in GOD, and its hope, utterly detached from earth, is anchored with CHRIST within the veil.

Such are some aged servants of GOD, and their peace is the natural result of a long obedience. Man reaps as he sows, and he who sows self-discipline and self-sacrifice for others, will reap, if his years hold out, an old age of glory, and the setting sun as it hastens to its rest will pour parting beams of blessing and of joy, which will long linger in the memory and cheer the heart of those who remain.

But is there no peace in age for others who are not so disciplined? There is. It is promised, "I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten."<sup>1</sup> There will be peace in the latter end. If there must be depression, regrets and feebleness in these last years, yet bear this patiently as part of the necessary punishment of past sin. Dwell much on the sufferings of CHRIST, and die with Him to all the old sin and all the old self-will; so shall you rise again with Him to newness of life. GOD will renew your years as the eagle, for they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; "the everlasting GOD Who fainteth not, neither is weary, will give power to the faint, and to them that have no might He will increase strength."

<sup>1</sup> Joel ii. 25.

By constant acts of faith in Him, leaning ever when weakest on His strength, you will gradually gain perfect peace and composure of mind. And so "it shall come to pass, that at eventide there shall be light."<sup>1</sup>

### 8. *Approach of Death.*

"And now I'm ready to depart,  
And take my joyful way  
To Him Who reigns King of my heart,  
Come when the summons may."

Last among the outward obstacles to peace, must be noted the approach of the King of Terrors. Yet even this need not disturb the peace of the aged saint. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for his latter end is peace.

Yet as death has a natural awfulness about it, I will add a few reflections to show what calm and peaceful thoughts may engage the mind of GOD's servant as his earthly life draws to a close.

Think on this, O servant of GOD who art drawing near to the dark valley, how that death comes not as an enemy to drive thee whither thou wouldst not, not an officer of justice to hail thee to judgment, but as a messenger from GOD, to tell thee that thy labours are ended, that thy warfare is accomplished, and that henceforth there is laid up for thee a crown of life. Think of the deliverance after the first pang of dissolution, which thy ransomed spirit shall experience, when it quits the body which has imprisoned and burdened it so long, and when it is borne on wings of angels into that calm resting-place described as

<sup>1</sup> Zech. xiv. 7.

Paradise and Abraham's Bosom and the Sabbath-keeping of Rest, where thou shalt be with JESUS undergoing what preparation is still needed to fit thee for the mansions of glory.

Think of the prospect before thee, as the dark hour draws near, of entering into Rest, of being set free for ever from all possibility of sinning, of dwelling in a special sense with JESUS.<sup>1</sup> Thou shalt be not immediately in Heaven, but, as it were, in the ante-chamber of that glorious place, being arrayed in white robes,<sup>2</sup> and prepared for the Presence of the King; perfecting thy repentance, completing the subjugation of thy will to the purposes of God, and making up that which has been left behind of thy sanctification. In that still land, the river of thy peace will flow calm and full, but, as it were, by night, but in that night stars will shine forth unto thee such as in all the day of thine earthly existence thou hadst not dreamt of; wonders of grace will be unfolded for thee, and thou shalt understand the meaning of what before was hid from thee, and whilst thou mournest for thy sins and the sins of thy brethren still in the bonds of the flesh, thou wilt be comforted by the blessed angels and cheered by the fellowship of the saints.

Think, too, as the dark hour draws near, of the more distant glories that await thee after Paradise shall have made thee fit to enter upon them. Think,—but ah, how canst thou think? 'Tis more than “eye hath seen, or ear heard, or than hath entered into the heart of man.” Think of the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him. Oh,

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 8; S. Luke xxiii. 43.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. vi. 11.



with what an eternity of ever-varying bliss will He repay thy short earthly service. And once thou art set free from the body of death, no sin can reach thee more. None can pluck thee out of His Hands. No rebellious act of thine any more can erase thy name from the Lamb's Book of Life.

Think of this, as the dark hour draws near, that all that might have made thee fear to die has been done away ; thy sins all forgiven thee, CHRIST Himself thy Redeemer and thy Hope. However great the faults and imperfections of thy life, they need not distress thee now, since all is forgiven. Thou hast obeyed the voice of thy GOD, thou hast submitted thyself to His will, thou art ready to go into death and through whatsoever lies beyond it, according to His good pleasure. Should eternal justice or the interests of thy soul or the souls of others require that thou shouldst still suffer aught in that life—though thou knowest whatever befall thou art to be in joy and felicity—thou art willing in all things to obey Him. For selfishness has through grace ceased to rule thy life, and even in dying thou seekest not immediate blessedness, but only to fulfil all the purpose of thy GOD.

Think with grateful love, as the dark hour draws near, of all thy GOD has done for thee to bring thee to this blissful state of rejoicing in His holy will ; how He has trained and guided thee through a long and arduous life, with what patience He has borne with thy waywardness and thy sin, thy continual misunderstandings of His purposes, and thy heartless contentings against them when thou knewest them. Think

how surely thou mayest now rest thy hope in Him Who hath done so much for thee. The experience of a life-time is behind thee, it is not possible for thee to doubt the continuance of His interest in thee and care of thee. "Be confident then of this, that He Which hath begun a good work in thee will perform it unto the day of JESUS CHRIST,"<sup>1</sup> until that glorious Day of the LORD, the Day of Resurrection, the Day of Judgment, the Day of Eternal Life,<sup>2</sup> shall dawn on thee.

Think of this, as the dark hour draws near, how GOD has blessed thee in thine earthly life. Think on the friends He hath given thee, and on the love that has shone on thee from day to day. Reflect with gratitude that thine eye hath been open to see what was lovely in Nature round thee, and above all in the souls of men; how thou hast been permitted to reflect back from thy soul the smile of GOD which beamed upon the face of Nature, and which filled with gladness and with beauty the lower works of His Hand. For the fresh breeze of morning and the sweet calm of evening, and the brightness of the noonday sky and all thou hast known of earthly joy, give thanks. For the wisdom thou hast heard or read in books, for the progress of science and the arts thou hast witnessed in thy time, for the improvement in morals and in manners thou hast seen, and by example and precept hast furthered, for all the good thou hast been permitted to do and the evil thou hast prevented, give

<sup>1</sup> Phil. i. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Day of the LORD, I Cor. v. 8; of Resurrection, I Cor. xv. Judgment, S. Matt. xii. 36; of Eternal Life, Eph. iv. 30.

grateful and humble thanks. And think that He Whose works thou hast enjoyed, and Whose labours in man's advancement thou hast assisted, that He is thy God and thou art His, and for ever. Death shall not separate thee from Him, it shall bring thee nearer to His Feet. And the ages of Eternity will unfold to thee more and more the marvels of His beauty and His power, which have entranced thee here.

Think above all, as the last hour draws near, of thy Redeemer, of that "sweet Man of Godhead"<sup>1</sup> which hath shined in our earthly night, and shown to us the way to the FATHER'S House. Think on Him the King of Glory, Who condescended to die on the bitter Cross, worst of all conceivable deaths of shame and agony, to encourage thee to approach thy far easier death without fear. Think much on Him as the end draws nearer and nearer to call on Him continually. Be thy last thought a prayer to Him to hold thee amid the swellings of Jordan, and leaning on His strong arm freely step forth into the darkness.<sup>2</sup>

With such thoughts the dying servant of the LORD, amid the weakness and distress attendant on the separation of soul and body, may calm his spirit and feed the river of his peace. There are, thank God, so many in whom faith and obedience have completely overcome the natural horror of dying, that it would be sad and humiliating to give way to it. Fear of

<sup>1</sup> Richter.

<sup>2</sup> Jean Paul's "Erinnerungen aus den schönsten Stunden des Lebens für die letzten," ("Recollections from the fairest hours of life, for its last hours,") is a beautiful sketch, which might well be translated for one of our religious magazines.

dying would indicate a want of faith and a defeat by Satan, in the very time when this is most to be deprecated, both for the Christian's own sake and for the evil effect of such pusillanimity upon others. Rarely is such fear found within those who have been sincere in their religion; more frequently is it successfully concealed by those who have just cause to fear.

The noble Havelock in dying said, "For forty years I have so ordered my life, that now when death comes, I can meet it face to face without fear."

It is impossible here to give instances of peaceful deaths, they are so numerous: not a Christian household, thank God, but counts these among its treasures. I shall confine myself to two.

A young lady of nineteen was passing hence in the opening blossom of her days, but she had found peace in CHRIST, and did not fear to die. The following is a reminiscence from the closing hours of her life, given by her mother,—“About one she was very restless. I said, ‘You’re very restless, dear, but it’s all peace within, isn’t it?’ ‘Oh, yes,’ was the reply, ‘all peace.’ ‘What gives you that peace?’ ‘Just resting on JESUS.’”

In the last New Zealand war, a young British officer was found lying dead on the field of battle. His face was so shattered by bullets as to be scarcely recognizable, and his fair young hair was all bathed in blood. But within his hand was found a slip of paper, on which were a few words he had written with his pencil in the agony of death,—“My peace flows like a river.”

## CHAPTER XI.

*THE RIVER OF PEACE.*

“Afterward he measured, and it was a River that I could not pass over ; for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a River that could not be passed over.”—Ezek. xlvii. 5.

**P**EACE, we have seen, is conditioned by obedience, and as it takes long for the children of men to learn to give up their will to GOD’S in all things, so it takes long before they acquire full peace. That is not GOD’S fault, nor is it wholly theirs, because all growth is slow ; though doubtless if they would walk diligently and unflinchingly in His ways, they would learn much sooner the perfection of obedience, and sooner receive the fulness of the blessing. Certain it is, after every fresh act of obedience, especially if it involve some self-denial, there will be an increase of it. The sincere servant of the LORD ought not then to be surprised if the great work of obedience and peace advance but slowly. If he look only to CHRIST, and if after every falling away, however slight it may appear, he return in penitence to His feet, the work will advance, and no power in hell can hinder it. His life will become more peaceful, though he will himself be the last to notice it, for his eye will be fixed, not on the thermometer of his own feelings, but on CHRIST ; others, however, will take knowledge of him that he has been with JESUS and perceive his gaining for Him a kingdom within his heart.

So his earthly life will come by degrees to possess a harmony and repose, a fulness and a power, which will be seen like the figure of the prophet, peace "as a River." It will grow and increase until it resembles some beautiful and majestic stream, which rolls its rejoicing waters onward to the sea,—calm, yet full of power. "Never hasting, yet never resting," it will ever be accomplishing that whereto it is sent. Its pure, translucent waters as they flow, will reflect the light of the Sun of Righteousness, and shine with the grace and truth which they receive from the Face of JESUS. Then those great hindrances to peace which disturb so sadly the lives of them who know not God,—such as loss of fortune, loss of a good name, opposition of enemies, loss of friends, failure, sickness, desolation, dread of death,—none, not even the worst of human ills, will greatly disturb the onward course of that River of his peace. When such calamities befall, it will be with him as it is in nature when some mountain-side loosened by the frost has slipped into the channel of some mighty river of the west. Is the noble stream arrested for more than a brief space, or does it turn aside from the God-appointed channel and journey by some other way? No; it gathers its powers and forcing for itself a passage through the obstructive mass, goes in triumph down the defile which its might hath made. Thus, too, will this River of peace take its victorious way through the mighty obstacles and ills of life, which will become only the occasion to prove and show to all men how real that peace is, and how strong. And the lesser trials of life, often as hard to bear as the heaviest, over them,

too, will the Christian be victorious, through the power of the peace of CHRIST.

Thus growing in beauty and in volume through many a cheerful mountain stream of Divine consolation and refreshment that comes to join it, will onward flow that River of peace. And as a river is a source of joy to the countries through which it passes, making glad the traveller who sees it from the far-off height, and blessing with its life-giving waters both small and great, causing the little shrubs and stately trees along its banks to rejoice, as well as the cities and villages through which its cleansing and refreshing waters flow, so, O Christian, will thy life gladden and purify the lives of those whose happy lot it will be to be blest by thee. Their lives will be the better and the holier for having been brought into contact with thy life, so calm, so full of the sweetness and the power of JESUS.

The river shall end its long journey in the sea : and the River of thy peace shall flow into the ocean of eternity, near where the city of GOD rears her marble towers, and sends out her snow-white bastions into the azure deep. But the peace of CHRIST shall keep thee, child of GOD, to the last. If thou wilt hearken to His commandments on to the end, thou shalt have true peace in the moment of thy release. For it is written, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, his latter end is peace."<sup>1</sup> Thou shalt be more than conqueror over that last enemy, let him come when and how he may.

Oh, happy in that moment if thou canst look back on a life spent in growing obedience and increasing

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxxvii. 37.

peace, and mark how thy brook became a river, and thy river is widening into a sea. That sea is the ocean of God's love, and on its further shore the Prince of Peace Himself will welcome thee ; and when the Day of Eternity breaks, His own hand shall crown thee. "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy LORD."



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